THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF CHRISTIANITY IN JOHN WESLEY'S EARLY THEOLOGY

A Study in the relationship of Love and Faith

A Thesis submitted to the Division of Theological Studies in the Graduate School of Drew University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

Lawrence D. McIntosh
Drew University
Madison, New Jersey

1966

PREFACE

It has been frequently stated, and sometimes lamented, that John Wesley was not a systematic theologian. The founder of Methodism certainly did not attempt a *summa theologica* or a carefully shaped exposition of biblical thought which characterizes the final edition of Calvin's Institutes, and various explanations have been offered for this fact. The sheer activity of the great evangelist, his sense of the urgency of preaching and, consequently, his insistence upon "plain truth for plain people," have been the reasons most commonly suggested. It is true that Wesley, in contrast to many clergy of his day, looked upon the world of sinners as his parish rather than the rarefied world of ideas. But the reasons proposed for his not being a systematic theologian, or perhaps a theologian at all, tend to be superficial.

In spite of his intensely active ministry, Wesley's writings comprise a considerable corpus. It includes many theological works, some expository, others polemical; some which speak to the major doctrinal issues of the time and others which raise speculative questions about which Wesley himself was curious. Although Wesley never forget, and seldom allowed others to forget, that he was an evangelist, yet during his long itineracy he found time and reason to write on the problems of philosophy, science, education, local politics, international relations, social conditions and most of the other matters which were exercising the leading minds of his century.

The suggestion to the effect that Wesley's desire for

plain speaking in some way modified his interest in doctrinal formulation reveals a misunderstanding of the man as well as the intellectual climate of the eighteenth century. The closing decades of the previous century had bequeathed an urge to simplicity and a distrust of superfluous rhetoric. The most sophisticated minds, now under the influence of John Locke, prized simplicity as the noblest ornament of truth. Wesley shared this opinion and defended it vigorously. Whether he was writing to "men of reason and religion," or to the lowly and uneducated, he applied his contemporary definition of good style, "perspicuity and strength, met together."

Dr. Albert Outler has recently asserted that Wesley was not a "theologian's theologian," rather his achievement lay in what might be called a "folk theology." By way of explanation, Outler writes,

> He was, by talent and intent, a folk-theologian: an eclectic who had mastered the secret of plastic synthesis, simple profundity, the common touch. He was an effective evangelist guided by a discriminating theological understanding, a creative theologian practically involved in the application of his doctrine in the renewal of the church.[1]

With that definition, Outler's designation would seem to be appropriate. The title, "folk-theologian," could only be misleading if it obscured the prevailing decision in regard to "plainness" or the fact that Wesley's own ability to communicate, as he said, ad populum, was the ability of a conscious stylist able to accommodate to most audiences. His dictum, "plain truth for plain people," far from indicating some form of naiveté, needs to be

---

1. John Wesley, (New York: Oxford, 1964), p.119.

interpreted in its eighteenth-century sense. It did not constitute a restriction upon Wesley's work as a theologian.

To say that Wesley was not a "theologian's theologian" also begs a definition. The statement is acceptable if it means that his writing did not influence appreciably the methodology of the academicians. He was, however, a theologian for preachers. Perhaps it is not too much to claim that Wesley's understanding of the theological task can be compared with Karl Barth's programmatic definition: "Its task is to criticize and revise language about God by the standard of the principle peculiar to the Church."[2] Theology does not necessarily require a symmetrical system, but rather that orderly reflection which focuses on emerging concerns in the light of the Gospel, and which immediately informs the preaching of the Church. In this sense Wesley was a theologian who deserves to be taken seriously. In spite of the bulk of Wesleyana which has somehow detached John Wesley's zeal from a doctrinal awareness, or most commonly, his "warmed heart" from a discerning mind, it can be claimed that the Evangelical Revival, as far as Wesley was responsible for its continuation, was theologically informed.

The question, however, is whether Wesley's theology has an internal coherency. Was there some unitive principle or hermeneutic which informed his doctrinal formulations? From what perspective is his thought most properly to be evaluated? Several doctrines: Justification, Sanctification, Christology, the

---

2. Church Dogmatics, 1/1, trans. G.T.Thomson (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936), p.5.

Atonement, the Holy Spirit, the New Birth, and Christian Perfection, could be claimed as being cardinal to Wesley's thought. Certain of these received emphasis because of their neglect by the contemporary Church. Accordingly, Christian Perfection was "the grand depositum" of the Methodists. Yet Wesley offers little assistance in the search for a single structural key to his theology, unless it be the primacy of divine grace. He was concerned with the fullness of the Gospel according to the Scriptures. This is the reason for his usual practice of grouping together the fundamental doctrines of repentance (which presupposes original sin), justification by faith, and holiness or perfected love. For example, in a letter written in 1746, Wesley provided this summary:

> I have again and again, with all the plainness I could, declared what our constant doctrines are, whereby we are distinguished only from heathens or nominal Christians, not from any that worship God in spirit and in truth. Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three- that of Repentance, of Faith, and of Holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself. [3]

When this present project was first conceived, the intention was to show, by an analysis of Wesley's complete writings, that there is a consistency in his theological method and exposition which derives from a discernment of what he called, "God's gracious design," a design in which faith and love are the essential ingredients. This theme suggested itself in the course of a reading of Wesley's writings as a theological biography. The

---

3. The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., edited John Telford (London:Epworth, 1931), pp.267-268.

early Oxford and Georgia periods were marked by a paramount concern to express the holy-love of God in word and deed. Following the mission which ended in despair, Wesley was led to accept the Reformation principle and to know the reality of being justified by grace through faith in Christ. Although he was to proclaim this doctrine throughout his ministry, he nevertheless rejected an absolute solifidianism. He believed that "we are justified by faith alone, and yet by a faith as is not alone." In other words, he conceived the Christian life as having faith as its foundation and love as its end.

As the research on this project proceeded, it became increasingly apparent that more attention should be paid to Wesley's formative period than is usual in discussions of his theology. Only by viewing his developing thought against the immediate backdrop of the Anglican tradition, and by taking account of those influences which shaped his theology, is the student of Wesley in the position to assess the direction of his early development and to explain the radical changes which came in 1738. In particular, a contextual consideration of the bases of Wesley's prevailing doctrine of holiness would show how it expressed both the strengths and weaknesses of his inheritance. Further, such a detailed study would provide an explanation for Wesley's claim, momentary as it was, that he had discovered a "new doctrine" of faith.

It became apparent also that an examination of the Anglican setting of Wesley's thought would be of historiographical importance. Although it does not belong to the present assignment, a study of the history of the interpretation of Wesley's thought would show that the ecclesiastical or confessional

interests of Wesley's followers and critics alike have affected their interpretation of the founder of Methodism. There have been several moments in the history of Wesley research when the historiography has been obscured rather than illuminated by contemporary and sometimes polemical concerns. The extent to which the departure of the Methodists from the Church of England in the early nineteenth century influenced the interpretation of Wesley and the editing of his works has not, to this author's knowledge, been fully investigated. Later in the same century, the emergence of the Oxford Movement sponsored a renewed interest in the question of Wesley's churchmanship, but the debate tended to be conducted in terms of the Tractarian theses and the current options. Again, in this present century, the revival of Reformation studies under the auspices of "neo-orthodoxy," and the attempt by Father Piette to "catholicise" Wesley, has meant that subsequent works have generally construed him in the categories of the Continental Reformation. One may prophesy that, as a result of the present conversations between the Church of England and The Methodist Church, a further spate of writing will claim Wesley's support for premeditated conclusions, one way or the other. And still Wesley may not be understood on his own terms.

The founder of Methodism willingly admitted that he proclaimed no new doctrines. If we take him at his word, he is to be thought of as a member and theologian of the Anglican tradition with a discerning knowledge of its Reformation heritage and a vital concern for its message and mission in the eighteenth

century. He would not allow his vacillations in regard to the "practice" of the Church to be interpreted as a depreciation of her fundamental doctrines. Doctrinally, Methodism was to be Anglicanism in earnest. This study of Wesley's early thought will reveal a certain continuity with the major Anglican theme - "The Nature and Design of Religion," while the events of 1738 will reveal Wesley's critical reflections on this theme in the light of the doctrine of faith so firmly established in the Reformation formularies.

In Part I there will be a brief and selective description of elements and problems in Anglican theology in its period of reaction and reconstruction in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In accord with the major interest of this assignment, attention will be directed particularly to recurring patterns in the Anglican theology of salvation, and to the nature of love and faith within them.

In Part II there will be two chapters. The first will be concerned with specific sources of influence upon Wesley's formative period; sources which shaped his theology. The second chapter will be devoted to an examination of Wesley's own doctrinal expressions in this early period. It can be shown that his theology of salvation was established during this period and although there were to be subsequent revisions in detail, no major tenet in Wesley's soteriology was changed following the critical year of 1738. There is, therefore, some justification for considering this early period of learning, striving, mission, despair and faith in some detail.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PART ONE. THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF RELIGION IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ANGLICANISM	
Introduction	1
A. Ecclesia Anglicana: Reaction and Restoration	4
B. The Scientific Movement, and its Meaning for Theological Thinking	12
C. Of Faith and Good Works	24
D. The Criticism of Calvinist Doctrine	34
E. John Locke and Samuel Clarke: A Summation	41
F. Some Reflections	51
PART TWO. THE NATURE OF LOVE AND FAITH IN THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY	
Chapter One: The Shaping of John Wesley's Theology	
Introduction	60
A. The Beginnings of a Ministry	66
B. The Theological Influence of John Wesley's Parents	68
i. The Knowledge of God	70
ii. The Nature of Faith	74
iii. Predestination	78
C. Literary Sources	85
1. The Church Fathers	85
2. Thomas à Kempis	97
3. Jeremy Taylor	102
4. The Cambridge Platonists and John Norris	110
5. Henry Scougal	126
6. The Mystic Writers	132
7. William Law	138
Some Reflections	148

Page

Chapter Two: The Expression of John Wesley's Early Theology

Introduction 157

A. The Scriptural Principle 160

B. The Intention to Love in Wesley's Early Preaching 169

Appendix: John Wesley's Early Sermons 186

C. Reflections upon Despair 189

D. The New Doctrine 203

E. Theological Evaluation 218

Conclusion 235

Bibliography 241

PART ONE

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF RELIGION IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ANGLICANISM

Introduction

It has been acknowledged that John Wesley was not a systematic theologian in the usual sense in which that designation is used. If he had been such a theologian, he would have appeared as an anomaly on the English scene. He belonged to a period and indeed to a tradition which was not noted for its "systematizing theologists."[1] Archbishop William Wake, writing in 1718 to a correspondent who had asked him to recommend a system of divinity suitable for students, replied, "I know of none that I could recommend. Our church stands upon a different bottom from most of those in which system-writers have been bred."[2]

---

1. Alexander Knox, Wesley's correspondent, in citing Lord Bacon's disapproval of the scholastic method wrote, "It was no unjust representation of those systematizing theologists, to describe them as 'forcing up' the water of life 'into a cistern, and from thence fetching and deriving' it 'for use.'" Remains, (London: Duncan and Malcolm, 1844), III, p. 2.
(Throughout this work the orthography is modernized and the capitalization of words is reduced unless the author's stress is thereby weakened.)

2. Norman Sykes, William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657-1737, (Cambridge, 1957), Vol. II, p. 163. Cited by H. R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 179.
The third Earl of Shaftesbury, who died in 1713, made it clear for his century that "the most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system." Cited Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 84. Cf. also Carl Michalson, "The Hermeneutics of Holiness in Wesley," The Heritage of Christian Thought, ed. Robert E. Cushman and Egil Grislis (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 127, where the source of this quotation is given as Characteristics, ed. John M. Robertson (London: Grant Richards, 1900), I, 189.

The Anglican divines of the latter half of the seventeenth century, following Chillingworth's dictum, had declined to call any man master.[3] They continued to view, with equal disapprobation, the systems of the Schoolmen and the determined dogmatics of Protestant Orthodoxy which, in Puritan form, had proved so divisive in their recent history. The Cambridge Platonist, John Smith, had established the prevalent attitude for the period in his Discourse on Divine Knowledge:

> The knowledge of Divinity that appears in systems and models, is but a poor wan light, but the powerful energy of Divine knowledge displays itself in purified souls... To seek our divinity in books and writings, is "to seek the living among the dead:" We do in vain seek God many times in these where his truth too often is not so much enshrined as entombed.[4]

At the risk of oversimplifying the complex and transitional period following the Restoration, a brief account will now be given of some elements of a theology which express the Anglican reaction to dogmatism and its attempt at restatement. The reason for this procedure has already been suggested. John Wesley was thoroughly educated within this tradition. In later years he was to discover that the Anglican spectrum was wider than this immediate past. He was to return to the English Reformers for doctrinal support and to the Puritans for vital experiential depth. But his sense of the nature

---

3. McAdoo, op. cit., p. 1.

4. Select Discourses (London: Rivington, 1821), p. 5; also in Anglicanism, eds. Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross (London: S.P.C.K., 1962) p. 223. Hereinafter cited as Anglicanism, c.f. also Henry More, loc. cit., pp. 641-645. See also Note (44) below.

and design of Christianity, evident in the writings of his formative period and retained throughout his life, can best be understood as a critical reflection on the methodological and theological options bequeathed by the seventeenth-century churchmen.

This section is not intended to be a chapter in the history of doctrine. It does not purport to describe the comprehensiveness which has marked the Anglican tradition and which is particularly apparent in this period. While acknowledging the intrinsic relation of faith and order in the Church of England, the purpose here, in accord with the interest of this work, is to select certain motifs which characterize its theology of faith. The problem of the nature of faith, however, depends upon the way in which the knowledge of God is thought to be possible. Therefore sources and idioms of Anglican theological method must also be examined. This is all the more necessary in so far as this tradition is characterized and united by a theological method rather than by a common assertion of doctrines. Further, the Restoration era was marked by a methodological crisis which was to pose major alternatives for eighteenth-century thought.

The aim of this chapter then is to note certain elements in the method and theology of the Church of England which, in this period, sought to preserve its doctrinal inheritance while, at the same time, to be responsible to an age which was generally acknowledged to be "the age of reason."

A. ECCLESIA ANGLICANA: REACTION AND RESTORATION

A characteristic of Anglicanism in the second half of the seventeenth century was its weariness of the confessional wrangling and persecution which had so spoiled the religious life of England. Such representative theologians as Robert Sanderson, Joseph Glanvill, Jeremy Taylor, the Cambridge Platonists - John Smith, Ralph Cudworth and Henry More - were together as advocates of toleration.[5] They opposed the bondage of Rome, the "intricate opinions" of protestant dogmatics and the intensity of Puritan religion. The criticisms of the misconstrued zeal of those who would perpetuate a system for its own sake are legion.[6]

---

5. Cf. the title of Joseph Glanvill's influential work, The Vanity of Dogmatizing: or Confidence in Opinions (London: Everden, 1661), and Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society (London: Martyn, 1667; St. Louis: Washington University Studies, 1959), "Now since the King's return, the blindness of the former ages, and the miseries of the last, are vanished away: now men are generally weary of the relics of antiquity, and satiated with religious disputes." (p. 152).

6. An outstanding example is Jeremy Taylor. "We cannot be well supplied out of Roman storehouses: for though there the staple is, and very many excellent things exposed to view; yet we have found the merchants to be deceivers, and the wares too often falsified." The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor, Heber-Eden ed. (London, 1849-1852), IX, vi. "Some men are forced by their interest and opinions to say, that although to human reason some of their articles seem to have in them contradictions, yet it is the defect of their reason, and their faith is the more excellent, by how much reason is more at a loss. So do the Lutherans about the ubiquity of Christ's body, and the Papists about transubstantiation, and the Calvinists about absolute reprobation, as being resolved upon the propositions, though heaven and earth confute them. Ibid. p. 69.

Jeremy Taylor, who represented the spirit of Anglicanism with distinction, published an advanced statement of concern for toleration in his The Liberty of Prophesying (1647). In the dedicatory epistle he described the liberal spirit for which he was pleading:

> If the persons be Christians in their lives and Christians in their profession, if they acknowledge the eternal Son of God for their Master and Lord, and live in all relations as becomes persons making such professions, why then should I hate such persons whom God loves and who love God, who are partakers of Christ and Christ hath a title to them, who dwell in Christ and Christ in them, because their understandings have not been brought up like mine, have not had the same masters, they have not met with the same books nor the same company, or have not the same interest, or are not so wise, or else are wiser; that is, for some reason or other which I neither do understand nor ought to blame, have not the same opinions that I have, and do not determine their school-questions to the same sense of my sect or interest?[7]

This attitude, although expressed with characteristic moderation, was by no means passive. Taylor conceived the mission

---

7. Ibid. V,346. Also, "It is not the differing opinions that is the cause of the present ruptures, but want of charity; it is not the variety of understandings, but the disunion of wills and affections; it is not the several principles, but the several ends, that cause our miseries; our opinions commence, and are upheld, according as our turns are served, and our interests are preserved, and there is no cure for us but piety and charity. A holy life will make our belief holy, if we consult not humanity and its imperfections in the choice of our religion, but search for truth without designs save only of acquiring heaven, and then be as careful to preserve charity as we were to get a point of faith; I am much persuaded we shall find out more truths by this means; or however, which is the main of all, we shall be secured though we miss them; and then we are well enough." (p. 367).

of Anglicanism to be the restoration of the faith and practice of the Early Church. With a knowledge of the Fathers so typical of these divines, he claimed the historic continuity of Ecclesia Anglicana in matters of faith and order over against the pretensions of Rome and the diverse rigidities of the several protestant groups. The tendency to retire behind the periods of dispute in an attempt to recover the simplicity of the faith which had girded primitive Christianity was so marked that it can properly be regarded as a methodological principle.[8]

Doctrinally, this appeal to antiquity confirmed the distinction between "fundamentals" and "accessories" in matters concerning salvation. Richard Hooker had established this distinction for his tradition and it was to be perpetuated throughout the seventeenth century and beyond it.[9] The fundamental doctrines were as few and as unambiguous as the phrases of the Apostles' Creed. Jeremy Taylor declared that

---

8. McAdoo, op. cit., p. 316. The continuity of the Church of England with the primitive Church was asserted categorically by James 1 in A Premonition to All Most Mighty Monarchs, Kings, Free Princes, and States of Christendom (1609). The text is in Anglicanism, op. cit., pp. 3-8.

9. Anglicanism, op. cit., pp. xxivf.; for the Puritan objection to this distinction, John Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1874), 11, 4.

"men should not make more necessities than God made, which indeed are not many."[10] The depositum fidei enclosed within the Creed affirmed the central message of the Scriptures and was itself confirmed by tradition.

The sovereign authority for the Church was the Bible as Chillingworth had made clear:

---

10. Dedicatory Epistle, The Liberty of Prophesying, Works V, 346, c.f. also p. 348.
Taylor found support for the priority of the rule of faith and for the distinction between fundamentals and accessories in Tertullian (p. 378): Regula quidem fidei una omnino est sola immobilis et irreformabilis ....Hac lege fidei manente, caetera jam disciplinae et conversationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante scilicet et proficiente usque in finem gratia Dei. (De Virginibus Velandi 1,3-4. Tertulliani Opera, Pars 11, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, (Turnholti, Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, MCMLIV., p. 1209.).
Taylor's free translation reads: "This symbol is the one sufficient, immovable, unalterable, and unchangeable rule of faith, that admits no increment or decrement; but if the integrity and unity of this be preserved, in all other things men may take a liberty of enlarging their knowledge and prophesyings, according as they are assisted by the grace of God." (378).
Cf. The Writings of Tertullian, Vol. 111, Ante-Nicene Christian Library Vol. XV111 (Edinburgh: Clarke, 1870), pp. 154-155. In his second sermon on The Whole Duty of the Clergy, Taylor puts the distinction in a more succinct form, "There is a 'classis' of necessary articles, and that is the apostles' creed, which Tertullian calls 'regulam fidei,' 'the rule of faith;' and according to this we must teach necessities: but what comes after this is not so necessary; and he that puts upon his own doctrines a weight equal to this of the apostles' declaration, either must have an apostolical authority, and an apostolic infallibility, or else he transgresses proportion of faith, and becomes a false apostle." Works, VIII, 529. This sermon is an extended treatment of the responsibilities of scriptural interpretation (507-532).

> The BIBLE, I say, the BIBLE only, is the Religion of Protestants. Whatsoever else they believe beside it, and the plain irrefragable, indubitable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion: but as matter of Faith and Religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption. [11]

The three Creeds of the Early Church were received as proper interpretations of the Scriptures, and the decisions of the four councils were unerring in so far as they were controlled by this prior biblical authority. Where there were problems of interpretation, the Church was to be guided by the consensus patrum. The Anglican formularies - the Homilies and Articles - had assumed this teaching on Scripture and tradition, and they represented the doctrinal position of the Church of England in relation to the theologies of Western Christendom.

Chillingworth, whose treatise on The Religion of Protestants (1638) was one of the most famous of the century criticized the Tridentine doctrine that Scripture and tradition were co-ordinate sources of revelation. But he insisted with Hooker upon the need for interpreting the authority of Scripture by reason. Speaking against the Roman Church from which he had come, he writes:

---

11. Anglicanism, op. cit., p. 104. Hooker had issued the following "protestant" principle: "Whatsoever to make up the doctrine of man's salvation is added, as in supply of the Scripture's inefficiency, we reject it. Scripture purposing this, hath perfectly and fully done it." Ecclesiastical Polity, 11, viii, 5. The Works of Mr. Richard Hooker. John Keble ed. (Oxford, 1836), 1,420.

> Following your Church, I must hold many things not only above reason, but against it, if any thing be against it; whereas following the Scripture I shall believe many mysteries, but no impossibilities; many things above reason, but nothing against it; many things which had they not been revealed, reason could never have discovered, but nothing which by true reason may be confuted; many things which reason cannot comprehend how they can be, but nothing which reason can comprehend that it cannot be. Nay I shall believe nothing which reason will not convince that I ought to believe it; for reason will convince any man, unless he be of a perverse mind, that the Scripture is the Word of God. And then no reason can be greater than this, "God says so, therefore it is true." [12]

Jeremy Taylor's adherence to this principle is evident when he states, "I affirm nothing but upon grounds of Scripture, or universal tradition, or right reason discernible by every disinterested person."[13] Where there are difficulties, reason "proceeding upon best grounds, is the best judge."[14] The best grounds, according to Taylor, are divine revelation, human authority and probability. He examines some factors which cause reason to err and offers two interpretative principles which characterize Anglican piety.

---

12. Ibid., p.105-106. I am indebted to the editorial comment on this extract, (p. 103).

13. Works, IX, xiv; cited McAdoo, op. cit., p. 53.

14. Ibid., V,494. On the role of reason in Taylor, McAdoo, op. cit., p. 61f and C.J.Stranks, The Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), p.307, and Appendix F.

> As for guiding our judgments, and the use of our reason in judging for ourselves, all that is to be said is reducible to this one proposition: since errors are then made sins, when they are contrary to charity, or inconsistent with a good life and the honour of God, that judgment is the truest, or at least that opinion most innocent, that, 1. best promotes the reputation of God's glory; and 2. is the best instrument of holy life. For in questions and interpretations of dispute, those two analogies are the best to make propositions, and conjectures, and determinations.[15]

So Taylor's presupposition concerning the necessity for a life of holiness in fact functions hermeneutically as he attends to the interpretation of scripture and doctrine. This emphasis on the holy life will be examined presently. First, however, it must be observed that the principles of authority which have been outlined were not without certain ambiguities, which were soon to be reflected in the theological debate. In the post-Restoration Church a methodological crisis in relation to the possibility of the knowledge of God, came to a head. It would be oversimple to divide the seventeenth century in half and call the first period an age of revealed religion and the post-Restoration period an age of reasonable religion. Nevertheless it is true that before the century closed the theological debate did center on the claims of revelation and reason, and that the hinge of this debate was the sense of the transcendent.

In 1659 Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition of the Creed, had defined faith as "an assent unto truths credible upon the testimony of God delivered unto us in the writings of the

---

15. Ibid. V,513.

Apostles and Prophets."[16] The Latitudinarian preacher, Archbishop Tillotson, could subscribe to a similar definition:

> Divine faith, is an assent to a thing upon the testimony or authority of God; or, which is all one, an assent to a truth upon divine revelation.[17]

But it was possible to add that reason "is the faculty whereby revelation is to be discerned." It was the purpose of revealed religion, not to undermine natural religion, but to complete it.[18] John Locke was to confirm this formulation. Matters of faith were above reason, but they were not contrary to reason. All truths of revelation must be authenticated by reason. Reason had become the measure of their possibility.[19]

With the rise of Deism, rationalism would take control. During the latter half of the seventeenth century, however, reason was not conceived of as a form of ratiocination, but as a faculty illumined and sustained by the Holy Spirit. It was "the candle of the Lord."[20] For a time reason could

---

16. John Pearson, An Exposition of the Creed (Oxford, 1833), 1, 24.

17. The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, The Seventh Edition (London, 1714), p.654. Cited S.L.Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Dobson, 1951), p. 17.

18. McAdoo, op.cit., p. 175.

19. Cf. Bethell, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

20. The saying of Benjamin Whichcote on the basis of Proverbs 20:27. "The spirit in man is the candle of the Lord, lighted by God, and lighting men to God. It is from God by way of efficiency, and to God finally." Anglicanism, op.cit., p.213. Also Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James Pettegrove (Austin: University of Texas, 1953), pp.40f. For a full treatment, W.C.de Pauley, The Candle of the Lord (London: SPCK, 1937).

remain in harmony with faith on those terms which Jeremy Taylor had established.

> Faith gives a new light to the soul, but it does not put our eyes out; and what God hath given us in our nature, could never be intended as a snare to religion... Whatsoever is against right reason, that no faith can oblige us to believe. For although reason is not the positive and affirmative measure of our faith, and God can do more than we can understand, and our faith ought to be larger than our reason, and take something into her heart that reason can never take into her eye, - yet in all our creed, there can be nothing against reason.[21]

So revelation is conserved, but it is also obvious that an imprimatur had been given to a new direction in theological thinking. With the development of the empirical sciences it soon became apparent that revealed religion had lost its sovereignty and, at best, would now be correlated with natural religion. Some of the theological aspects in this development must now be considered.

B. THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT, AND ITS MEANING FOR THEOLOGICAL THINKING

One of the axioms for the foundation of the Royal Society in 1660 was that theological conceptions could be integrated with the direction which the empirical sciences were taking. Churchmen, far from finding any disparity, were generally optimistic about a reciprocity. A clear statement of this integration and an apology for its validity is to be found in

---

21. From Taylor's section on the work of faith in the reception of the Holy Communion, The Worthy Communicant, Works VIII, 105-106.

Thomas Sprat's History of the Royal Society which was published in 1667.[22]

This work contains elements of reaction which were persistent during this period. Sprat attacks dogmatism, disputation, enthusiasm and obscurantism.[23] His positive concern, however, in this apologia was to show that the work of the Society in experimental science would not prejudice the claims of religion or, in particular, the faith and worship of the Church of England. It would in no way hinder the holy life.[24] In regard to the knowledge of God, of man and of nature, it was possible and desirable to have a division of labor between the theologian and scientist. The

---

22. Op.cit. For a convenient summary of the History, Gerald Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge, 1950), pp.95-98.
Thomas Sprat (1635-1713) was subsequently Bishop of Rochester. It is of interest to note his association with the Wesley family. He was at Oxford with John Wesley's grandfather, John Wesley (1636-1678); he ordained Samuel Wesley deacon in 1688; in his old age he employed Samuel Junior, John's brother, to read to him. John Wesley read his works while at Oxford.
Cf. George Stevenson, Memorials of the Wesley Family (London: Partridge, 1876), pp.19,60,235 and V.H.H. Green, The Young Mister Wesley (London: Arnold, 1961), pp. 275, 308.

23. History of the Royal Society, pp. 25f, 375f.

24. Ibid., pp.345-369.

scientist, however, must acknowlege the limitations as far as a knowledge of God is concerned.

> As for the first, they meddle no otherwise with Divine things, than only as the Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness of the Creator, is displayed in the admirable order, and workmanship of the creatures. It cannot be denied, but it lies in the Natural Philosophers hands, best to advance that part of Divinity: which though it fills not the mind, with such tender, and powerful contemplations, as that which shows us man's redemption by a Mediator; yet it is by no means to be passed by unregarded: but is an excellent ground to establish the other. This is a Religion, which is confirmed, by the unanimous agreement of all sorts of worships: and may serve in respect to Christianity, as Solomon's Porch to the Temple; into the one the Heathens themselves did also enter; but into the other, only God's peculiar People.[25]

With this proposition, the churchmen were encouraged to patronize the Society's work which, in attending to nature, sought to glorify God and increase piety. Sprat maintained that far from proving detrimental to the Church of England, this work would parallel the intention of the Reformation.

> The Church of England will not only be safe amidst the consequences of a Rational Age, but amidst all the improvements of Knowledge, and the subversion of old opinions about Nature, and the introduction of new ways of Reasoning thereon. This will be evident, when we behold the agreement that is between the present Design of the Royal Society, and that of our Church in its beginning. They both may lay equal claim to the word Reformation; the one having compassed it in Religion, the other purposing it in Philosophy. They both have taken a like course to bring this about; each of them passing by the corrupt Copies,

---

25. Ibid., p.82. Similarly, Robert Boyle, Anglicanism, op. cit., p.766-767.

> and referring themselves to the perfect Originals for their instruction; the one to the Scripture, the other to the large volume of the Creatures.[26]

The scientist, Robert Boyle, though not in holy orders, was a devoted churchman and biblical scholar. His position, as John Dillenberger remarks, represented "the unity of two loves."[27] Apart from his endorsement of the Royal Society

---

26. Ibid., pp.370-371, also pp.132-133. R.K.Merton, in his intensive essay, "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," Osiris, Vol.IV (1938), pp.360-632, asserts the relationship between the Puritan ethic and scientific investigation. He cites Troeltsch's thesis that "the Calvinist doctrine of progressive sanctification, according to which the individual who has been predestined to grace may progressively trace his election through practical proofs of achievement, was congenial to a belief in social progress generally." (p.592) Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931), 11,604. Also, Meyrick Carré, Phases of Thought in England (Oxford, 1949), pp.273f. But this congeniality was also the case with the more moderate, non-Calvinist Anglicans. While statistically the Puritans were well represented in the Society, Merton ignores the prominence of the Cambridge Platonists and orthodox Anglicans. Cf. Sprat's list of nearly two hundred members at the time of writing (pp.431-433) which includes, apart from the bishops, Henry More, John Pearson, Joseph Glanvill and Robert Boyle. For further criticism of Merton's study, John Dillenberger, Protestant Thought and Natural Science (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p.110,n.15, and Charles E. Raven, Natural Religion and Christian Theology (Cambridge,1953), 1,107,n.1.

27. Protestant Thought and Natural Science,p.112. Dillenberger provides a brief but useful analysis of Boyle's science and theology. Robert Boyle was Governor of the Corporation for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England; he devoted large sums for the translation of the Bible for missionary enterprises, and for the establishment of the Boyle Lectures in Theology "for the defence of the Gospel against infidels of all sorts." He learned Greek, Hebrew, Syriac and Chaldee that he might read the Scriptures in the original. Cf. Merton, op. cit. p. 464 n.61 and Raven, op. cit.,p.132f.

in terms similar to those of Sprat, Boyle is important for his attempt to reconcile revealed and natural religion. While accepting implicitly the fundamental claims of revealed religion, his major contribution to Anglican methodology was his defense of natural theology.[28]

Boyle believed that God's principal aims in creation were the manifestation of his own glorious attributes and the welfare of his noblest creature, man. This revelation came through the Scriptures but also through the natural world as verbum visible. The attributes of God, his power, wisdom and primarily, his goodness, are "visibly displayed in the fabric of the world," and the divine design is evident in the symmetry of nature.[29] It is a mark of ingratitude not to attend to both means of revelation.[30] But it would seem from the following quotation from his essay on the Scripture that Boyle could interpret them as if they presented a similar body of knowledge to that apprehended in nature.

---

28. McAdoo, op.cit., pp.284f, also Edwin Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science (London: Paul, Trench, Truber, 1932), pp. 187-196.

29. Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy, to be found in Anglicanism, op. cit., pp. 199-213; the quotation used, p. 203.

30. Burtt, op.cit., p.189. This was an important theme for Sprat: "In brief, if we rightly apprehend the matter, it will be found, that it is not only foolishness, but prophaness, for men to cry out against the understanding of Nature: For that being nothing else but the instrument of God, whereby he gives being and action to things; the knowledge of it deserves so little to be esteemed impious, that it ought rather to be reckoned as Divine." op.cit., p. 351.

> I resort to Scripture, not as to an arsenal for arms to defend a party or to defeat its enemies, but as to a beautiful temple, where I delight to range, and contemplate the elegance, the symmetry, and the magnificence of the structure; to cultivate an awful reverence, and to indulge my devotion to that Being, who is there announced, and whose admirable attributes are there displayed.[31]

R. S. Westfall, in his treatment of the relation of science and religion in the virtuosi, notes the scarcity of references to Christ and to redemption in Boyle's disquisitions on religion. He writes,

> To the attributes of the Creator Boyle devoted endless space; they were the religious questions that exercised his mind. He mentioned Christ, but he discussed God the Creator. The idea of redemption did not play an important role in his thought on moral living; he considered the attainment of virtue as an excellent choice dependent upon a person's comprehension of God.[32]

---

31. Some Considerations on the style of The Holy Scriptures, rendered into Modern Language by the Rev. P. Panter (London: Rivington, 1825), pp.87-88. As a Biblical scholar, Boyle was no simple literalist as is evident from the following rule Boyle lays down in the same treatise: "We should carefully distinguish betwixt what the Scripture itself says, and what is only said in the Scripture. For we must not look upon the Bible as an oration of God to men, or as a body of laws like our English Statute Book, wherein it is the legislator that all the way speaks to the people, but as a collection of composures that though the holy men of God, as St. Peter calls them, were acted by the Holy Spirit, Who both excited and assisted them in penning the Scripture, yet there are many others besides the Author and the penmen introduced speaking there." Anglicanism, op. cit., p. 114.

32. Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale, 1958), pp. 125-126.

Some demurrer must be made to a further statement by Westfall that "Boyle worshipped a Being shorn of redemptive mercy distinctive of Christian theology," but his conclusion to the matter is most certainly true:

> In the hands of men who were less devout his religious expressions could readily have been turned into deism. [33]

Robert Boyle, like Joseph Glanvill and John Ray, was able to carry out his work of unification with a sense of wonder and without accommodation. For them, natural religion was not a substitute for scriptural revelation. But the balance now established was precarious. In faithful innocence, Boyle seemed to be oblivious to the possibility of a scientific penetration of areas which he held as sacred. When the next generation of virtuosi concentrated on one feature of his work, there were to be consequences which would have horrified him.

This brief treatment of the aims of the Royal Society has shown that theological dogmatism was now challenged, explicitly and implicitly, by reasonable men within the Church. Rather than a simple acceptance of the Church's authority and doctrine, it was now thought possible to attend to the transcendent by means of rational and empirical enquiry. From now on the Christian faith would have to be reconciled with the new learning. Before leaving this subject some attention should be given to the concepts of design and progress which are intrinsic to the new development.

The late Canon Charles Raven, who had a special interest

---

33. Ibid., p. 127.

in the relations between theology and science in this period, provided a valuable summary of the leading issues:

> If we are to understand the origin and influence of the scientific movement, we must recognize first that it owed an immense debt to the Platonist and Aristotelian traditions which had given to Europe a respect for reason and a belief that the world of the sense-perceptions bore an intelligible relationship to the world of general principles; secondly, that the Christian schema, though plainly defective in its details as to the origin and end of creation, yet had established a belief in an order and movement in the course of events which, if expressed in too crude a teleology, yet gave scientists their impulse towards the discovery of evolutionary developments; and thirdly, that Christians themselves, dissatisfied with their own traditions and with the friction and maladjustments of secular affairs, were the pioneers in what they regarded as a definitely religious adventure. Men turned to the study of science not as rebels against Christianity but as dedicating themselves to a new and more plainly Christian crusade.[34]

It is Raven's second point, on the sense of design in theological and scientific thinking, which is of particular interest to our subject.

Theologians, as different as the Cambridge Platonists, the Latitudinarians and the virtuosi, the last of whom were supported toward the end of the century by Locke and Newton, began with the attributes of God and attempted to formulate God's providential relation to the world in terms of organic design. They proclaimed this design to be at once scriptural,

---

34. Science, Religion and the Future (Cambridge, 1943), p. 25. Also Raven's Natural Religion and Christian Theology, op.cit., 1, chapters VI and VII. Gerald Cragg has an excellent summary, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, op. cit., chapter V, "The Impact of the New Science."

reasonable and ultimately meaningful.[35] Over against the deterministic and materialistic doctrines in religion and the earlier science, there was an urge to assert the reality of God's unceasing concern for and providential activity within his world. In a rapprochement with the scientists, the churchmen remodelled the impersonal teleology of the scholastics and spoke of God's continuing order and economy.[36] Creation was a benevolent continuum.

One of the traditional doctrines which was called into question by this positing of continuity was that of particular

---

35. Cragg, op. cit., pp. 103-106.

36. For the contrast between scholastic and Newtonian teleology, Burtt, op.cit.pp.284-295 and Westfall, op.cit., pp.51-53. For a concise statement on the reintroduction of teleology into natural science after its banishment by the mechanical view, R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature (Oxford, 1960), p. 15f.
According to the Platonists, More and Cudworth, God employs "Plastick Nature" which is not to be identified as divine but is instrumental in informing and invigorating all matter. It could be compared with the logoi spermatikoi of the ancients. On this, Cassirer, op.cit., pp. 140-141 and Burtt, op.cit., pp.133-136. Robert Boyle found no need for such an hypothesis. General providence was implicit in the original creative act and its contemporary details were beyond human comprehension. For Boyle's criticism of More's concept, Anglicanism, op.cit., pp.236-237., also Westfall, op.cit., 84-85. Glanvill also thought that the theory of plastic nature was an explanation of an unknown by an unknown, but John Ray retrieved the principle to describe creation as continuous process. For a full discussion of the fortunes of the concept, William B. Hunter, "The Seventeenth-Century Doctrine of Plastic Nature," Harvard Theological Review XLIII (1950), 197-213.

providence.[37] Although the devoted Boyle and Ray solved the problem by a simple acceptance of the possibility of miracle, the following century was to see the whole notion of particularity subjected to rigorous examination. The idea of progress, implicit in the development of the new learning, had not yet been charged with the optimism of the deists, although that possibility was always latent. The confidence that right reason could fathom even the depths of the divine order restored a medieval homocentricity; the scientific affirmation of continuum tended to progressivism. Progress had been woven into the design of the universe and men were links in the "great chain of being" which stretches from imperfection to perfection.[38] In the hands of the deists such confidence

---

37. Westfall has an excellent discussion of the problem in his chapter, "Divine Providence and Natural Law," op.cit., pp. 70-105.

38. The classic work is, of course, Arthur O. Lovejoy's, The Great Chain of Being, A Study in the History of an Idea (New York: Harper, 1960). R.S.Crane has showed that, beginning with this period, an apologetic device employed by the more conservative theologians was to move with this tide of optimism, in "Anglican Apologetics and the Idea of Progress, 1699-1745," Modern Philology, 31 (1933-34), 273-306, 349-382. Crane's important summary conclusion is contained in this long sentence the style of which reflects the theme! "To this end they revived and turned to the uses of a new day the old patristic and scholastic doctrine of development in religious understanding, combining it with the current hypothesis of progress in science and the arts, enlarging it to apply to the spiritual and moral life of mankind in the future as well as in the present and past, and developing it as time went on, under the influence of "optimism" and the theory of association, into a conception of man's total career on earth as the manifestation of a great providential design which, working through natural as well as supernatural means, leads to a gradual but perpetual increase and diversification of religious, moral, intellectual, political, and social good, and thus in the end to the realization of a larger sum of human happiness than would be possible in any other conceivable way"(381-382).

in progress was to play havoc with the old doctrine of total depravity. Already, however, traditional doctrines were considerably weakened as men, caught up in the spirit of the age, spoke of human possibility rather than of redemption and, paradoxically, of gratitude rather than of forgiveness.

The rejection of dogmatism and the thrust of independent thinking had further consequences. The universal validity of natural religion entailed also its accessibility and therefore its simplicity. It contained the power of self-authentication and no longer required elaborate dogmatic assistance. Archbishop Tillotson provided the rationale for this position:

> To the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is required; but only a teachable disposition and a due application of mind. For whatever in religion must be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easy, and lie level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that God who would have all men to be saved, hath not provided for the salvation of all men.[39]

There was a constant attempt to retrieve the unum necessarum, the simplicity of the divine intention for man, liberated from the procrustean bed of dogma. The principles of natural religion, unaided by revelation, could lead all men, including

---

39. Quoted in Aharon Lichtenstein, Henry More, The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist (Massachusetts: Harvard, 1962), p.158. The concluding lines of John Locke's The Reasonableness of Christianity illustrate a similar principle: "That the poor had the gospel preached to them; Christ makes his mark, as well as business of his mission, Matt.11:5. And if the poor had the gospel preached to them, it was, without doubt, such a gospel as the poor could understand; plain and intelligible; and so it was, as we have seen, in the preachings of Christ and his apostles." The Works of John Locke, in Ten Volumes (London: 1801), VII, 158.

the "noble savage" to eternal life.[40]

Implicit also in this development is a new principle of individuation and a freedom for personal enquiry and expression. Among churchmen this could take any of the number of forms of free-thought, dissent, philosophical scepticism or even mysticism. Among the common people it meant an awareness of a certain responsibility for one's own salvation. There was now the possibility of an independent decision, that is, apart from the effective direction of the Church. It was to this possibility that the evangelicals would appeal. In some cases it gave rise to that "enthusiasm" which reasonable men had always deplored but which further incited them to seek rational grounds for faith.[41]

With these several expressions of the need for simplicity and reasonableness, there was a decided leaning toward "practical divinity." It needs to be emphasized that an acceptance of the postulates of natural religion did not make men indifferent to the claims of morality, but rather supported them. H.R.McAdoo shows how a strongly moral theology had always been part of the mainstream of the Anglican tradition:

---

40. Westfall, op.cit., p. 4.

41. The primary definition in Dr. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, though belonging to the eighteenth century, adequately sums up reasons for denunciation: "1. A vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favor or communication." The entry includes a citation from Locke, "Enthusiasm is founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rises from the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain." A Dictionary of the English Language in Four Volumes (Philadelphia: Thomas, 1818), Vol.II.

> This strain of "practical divinity" is a permanent feature in seventeenth-century writing, being no means confined to those who, like Taylor and Sanderson, made a formal study of the subject, and it had a formative influence on theological method. From Hooker to the Latitudinarians there are very few major writers who do not concern themselves, frequently to a considerable degree, with some aspects of the subject. It is one of the positive forms of expression of a general trend in Anglican theology at the time, which was the turning away from speculative systems and a reaching out for relevance and realism.[42]

In other words, the Anglican tradition was quite prepared to be told by Tillotson and Locke and Samuel Clarke that the design of reasonable Christianity was to promote a godly life. Jeremy Taylor and John Smith had already defined divinity as a "divine life," and Joseph Glanvill had affirmed that "religion consists not in knowing many things but in practising the few plain things we know."[43] The next question that must be examined is the status of faith in these presuppositions.

C. OF FAITH AND GOOD WORKS

The three Homilies of Thomas Cranmer, "Of Salvation," "Of the true, lively, and Christian faith," and "Of Good

---

42. The Spirit of Anglicanism, p. 38.

43. Quoted in Margaret L. Wiley, The Subtle Knot, Creative Scepticism in Seventeenth-Century England (London: Allen and Unwin, 1952), p. 225. The author comments, "Armed with this touchstone, a man would find it difficult to desert the via media of charity and to follow the false gods of his own dogmatism." (226). Also Jeremy Taylor, "The way to judge of religion is by doing of our duty: and theology is rather a Divine life rather than a Divine Knowledge." Works VIII, 368. See also Note 4 Supra.

Works," along with the Articles, comprise the normative exposition of Anglican soteriology. In the first of these Homilies it is stated that in justification, which is defined as forgiveness, three things concur:

> Upon God's part, his great mercy and grace, upon Christ's part, justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon our part, true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us. [44]

Repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God are present with faith but are excluded "from the office of justifying."

Cranmer was at pains to show that faith itself is not a virtue which is all-sufficing. The second part of this Homily concludes with Faith's address to the believer:

> It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only; and to him only I send you for that purpose, renouncing therein all your good virtues, words, thoughts and works, and putting your trust in Christ. [45]

---

44. Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer, Edited for the Parker Society (Cambridge, 1846), 11, 129.

45. Ibid. p. 132. G.W.Bromiley finds this to be an essential point in Cranmer's understanding of justification. In referring to Cranmer's Notes on Justification which comprise a collection of references from Scripture, the Fathers and Schoolmen (pp.203-211), Bromiley comments, "He insisted, of course, that we must not on any account think of faith as the ground of justification, for ultimately justification is not even by faith but only by grace. The doctrine of justification by faith was not designed in any sense to exalt faith as a chief or necessary work of men, but only to show the impossibility of justification except by the gracious work of God." Thomas Cranmer Theologian (New York: Oxford, 1956), p.29. Cranmer actually has the note, "Fides non meretur justificationem." beside the Augustinian reference he is using (Epist.clxxxvi.Alyp.et August. ad Paulinum.). Robert Barnes, friend of Luther, had already written, "We do not mean that faith, for its own dignity, and for its own perfection doth justify us. But the Scripture saith, that faith alone justifieth because it is that thing alone, whereby I do depend upon Christ." A Treatise on Justification, (1534), Writings of Tindal, Frith and Barnes (London: The Religious Tract Society, no date), pp.123-124.

True faith, as "a sure trust and confidence of the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ," is also Luther's "lively faith" which is readied for obedience and service.[46] No good work can be done without faith, but true faith "doth give life to the works." So Cranmer, with his fiduciary definition, attempted to combat that type of solifidianism which made a virtue of faith and also that antinomianism which denied that "faith is full of good works."

> If these fruits do not follow, we do but mock with God, deceive ourselves, and also other men.... For true faith doth ever bring forth good works, as St. James saith: "Show me thy faith by thy deeds." Thy deeds and words must be an open testimonial of thy faith; otherwise thy faith, being without good works is but the devil's faith, the faith of the wicked, a phantasy of faith, and not a true Christian faith.[47]

Cranmer's exposition of the doctrine had been at once plain and emphatic and yet, in the next century, Anglican theology could be quite indecisive in regard to these axioms of the Reformation.

---

46. Ibid. p. 135-136. Richard Hooker had written, "It is a childish cavil wherewith in the matter of justification, our adversaries do greatly please themselves, exclaiming, that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, and require nothing in Christians but faith; because we teach that faith alone justifieth; whereas we by this speech never meant to exclude either hope or charity from being always joined as inseparable mates with faith in the man that is justified; or works from being added as necessary duties, required at the hand of every justified man: but to show that faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification; and Christ the only garment which being so put on, covereth the shame of our defiled natures..." Works, op.cit., 111, Part II, 530.

47. Ibid. p. 140.

The orthodox position could still be put by men like William Beveridge in his standard commentary on the Articles. Countermanding the Roman view he wrote:

> By this merit (Christ's) we are accounted righteous before God; where we may notice by the way, how our being justified is here expressed by our being accounted righteous, and not by our being made righteous: for it is not by inhesion of grace in us, but by the imputation of righteousness to us that we are justified; as it is not by the imputation of righteousness to us, but by the inhesion of grace in us that we are sanctified. [48]

If Beveridge was being "protestant and reformed according to the Ancient Catholic Church,"[49] another bishop, George Bull, had stirred up the ancient debate on the role of good works in justification. In his Harmonia Apostolica (1669-1670) he rejected any teaching on justification which repudiated the value of good works.[50] He did not intend to deny that justification and salvation depend solely on the merits of Christ's atonement.[51] This objective deed had made possible the conditions of man's acceptance according to the evangelical covenant of obedience, which included good works, and faith. So Bull can summarize in this way:

---

48. Ecclesia Anglicana Ecclesia Catholica; or The Doctrine of the Church of England (Oxford, 1847), p. 287.

49. John Cosin's phrase; cf. H.A.McAdoo, The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology (London: Longmans, 1949), p.14.

50. Anglicanism, pp. 296-297.

51. Ibid. p. 299.

> Justification signifies that love of God, by which he embraces those who are already leading a holy life, and determines them to be worthy of the reward of life eternal through Christ. [52]

Two things were possible even allowing a theoretical allegiance to the Articles. Under Article XIII - Of Works before Justification - it was possible to claim that obedience, while not belonging to the order of merit, was nevertheless necessary. Secondly, to extend the meaning of Article XII - Of Good Works--beyond its intention and to claim that obedience was necessary to a second, or final justification. The latter notion had no foundation in the Articles, and contradicted the Reformation principle that in the beginning and at the end, man is justified sola fide. The debate continued into the next century and John Wesley was to be among the active participants and, incidentally, on this issue, an opponent of Bull's position.

Although there was controversy as to the status of good works prior to justification, there was general agreement as to the absolute necessity of grace and of the relationship of faith and love as reciprocals of grace. William Beveridge in writing on the twelfth Article repeats the Augustian construction:

> Though our justification doth pardon the sins we have committed heretofore, yet it doth not give us liberty to commit sin hereafter. No; but now we are justified by faith without works, we are bound as much to obey as if we were to be justified by works without faith. And the reason is because though we be justified by faith only, and not by works, yet we cannot be justified by such a faith as is without works. [53]

---

52. Quoted, William R. Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley (New York: Abingdon, 1946), p.38. Cannon has a balanced assessment of Bull's position(pp.36-42), also McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, pp.399-400.

53. Op.cit., pp.299-300.

According to Beveridge justification and sanctification cannot be divided but they need to be distinguished. Justification denotes "the imputation of righteousness to us," and sanctification denotes "the implantation of righteousness in us."[54]

Everyone who wrote or thought about these issues had to be responsible to the problem of relating Paul and James on the matter of faith and works. But the Augustinian solution once again had become common property. Here is the version from Beveridge:

> It is not from the works that accompany our faith, but from the faith which is accompanied by our works, that we are justified. And therefore St. Paul and St. James do not contradict each other; for the one speaks of the works which go before, the other speaks of the works that follow after justification.[55]

Within the unity of scriptural truth, faith and obedience are inseparable, and obedience has the form of love. This becomes the characteristic teaching of the Anglican theologians. In expounding the "divine life" they constantly resorted to Galatians 5:6. Jeremy Taylor's use is typical:

> When the apostles, by way of abbreviation, express all the body of Christian religion, they call it "faith working by love (Gal.5:6);" ..."Faith and repentance begin the Christian course. "Repent and believe the Gospel," was

---

54. Ibid. p. 289.

55. Ibid. p.292. Cf. Robert Barnes, op.cit., "Augustine declares in divers places, that blessed St. Paul, and St. James, seemed to be contrary in this matter, and declares how that St. Paul speaks of works that go before faith, and St. James speaks of works that follow faith." (p.118). Bull's Harmonia Apostolica was written to explain the agreement between the two apostles. For the full title of his work see Anglicanism, p. 296.

> the sum of the apostle's sermons; and all the way after it is, "faith working by love." [56]

Like Cranmer, the theologians of the Restoration period were confronted by solifidian and antinomian tendencies in some expressions of confessional orthodoxy.[57] If they tended to overbalance on the side of a theology of sanctification it was by way of reaction.

It has been observed that in Cranmer's exposition faith has an instrumental character. It was also possible to give faith a subordinate position in relation to love chiefly on the basis of an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13. Henry Hammond produced a Practical Catechism around the year 1644 which ran into many editions by the end of the century. On this point, and with the aid of this text, he wrote:

> Although very great things are said of faith, as of the only condition of justification and salvation, yet 1. this is when it is in conjunction with charity, faith consummate by love. And 2. it is observable, that the most imperfect things are always the most necessary, and consequently the great necessity of faith is no argument of its dignity in comparison of this other grace. .... Faith is the foundation, which though it be the most necessary part of the building, yet it is the lowest and most imperfect: charity the superstruction, which is never firmly built but when grounded in faith, and when it is so, it is far more excellent than its foundation. Besides, charity is a grace not out-dated in heaven, as faith and hope are. [58]

---

56. Works, 11, 297; also Taylor's sermon, Fides Formata; or, Faith Working by Love (James 2:24), Works, VIII, 284-302.

57. For a criticism of Solifidianism and a related discussion on the Fiduciary, Henry Hammond, The Miscellaneous Theological Works, (Oxford: Parker Ed, 1849), II, 126-133.

58. Miscellaneous Theological Works, I, 52.

So the goal for the man of faith was holy love. This was the persistent conclusion of the devotional writings of the Caroline divines, the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians. It followed from their sense of the primacy of love among the perfections of God.[59] The believer loves God because God first loved him, and only love or holiness can express the deiformity of the religious life according to the divine intention. In his famous sermon to the House of Commons in 1647, Ralph Cudworth had rehearsed this order, assuming the attribute of God:

> The end of the Gospel is life and perfection, it is a divine nature; it is a godlike frame and disposition of spirit, it is to make us partakers of the image of God in righteousness and true holiness.... Holiness is the best thing that God himself can bestow upon us, either in this world or the world to come. True evangelical holiness, that is, "Christ formed" in the hearts of believers, is the very cream and quintessence of the gospel.[60]

---

59. See Cassirer, op.cit., pp. 124-128 for Henry More's concept of "amor dei intellectualis." Also, Norman Sykes, Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century (Connecticut: Archon, 1962), p.257, for the tenet of the divine beneficence among the Latitudinarians.

60. A Sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster, March 31st, 1647 (Cambridge: Daniel, 1647, New York, Facsimile Text, 1930), pp. 46-47.

The work of Christ was, according to Jeremy Taylor, "to restore all to the intention of the first perfection."[61]

In spite of such references the general impression is that the theology of salvation has for its center, not a Christological presupposition but a prior decision as to God's nature and perfections. This decision, as has been shown, could be derived from natural religion just as easily as from revelation. In a sermon, "Concerning our imitation of the Divine Perfections," Tillotson explicitly lays down the order of thinking which had become characteristic of latitudinarian theology. Here are his two major and related axioms:

> 1. That the strongest and surest reasonings in religion are grounded upon the essential perfections of God.

---

61. Works II, 30.
For an exposition of the theme of restoration, George Bull's discourse on "The State of Man before the Fall.", Some Important Points of Primitive Christianity (Oxford: Baxter, 1816) 11,343-344. Bull depends upon Col. 3:9,10 and Eph. 4:24. His conclusion is that of Irenaeus,
"Et in eo quod dicat, secundam imaginem Conditoris, recapitulationem manifestavit ejus hominis, qui initio secundum imaginem factus est Dei. (Contra Haereses V, XII, 4).
Bull's Latin text has been cited; Cf. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, J.P.Migne, ed. (Paris, 1857), Tomus VII, 1155; Ante-Nicene Christian Library (Edinburgh: Clark, 1868), 1, 538.
Also, "Nos quod perdideramus in Adam, id est secundum imaginem et similitudinem esse Dei, hoc in Christo Jesu recipere." (Contra Haereses, 111, XVIII (XX), 1).
cf. PG. VII, 932; Ante-Nicene C.L., 1, 446.

2. That the truest and most substantial practice of religion consists in the imitation of God.[62]

These axioms are prior to any consideration of revelation, for revelation itself presupposes the perfections of God for its foundation.

Is it too much to say that the Christological heart of the soteriology of the English reformers had been by-passed, if not rejected?

---

62. Sermons, 14 volumes published from the originals by Dr. Barker (London: Chiswell, 1700-1704), V1, 44.

1.....so that even Divine Revelation itself doth suppose these for its foundation, and can signify nothing to us, unless these be first known and believed. Unless we be first persuaded of the providence of God, and his particular care of mankind, why should we believe that he would make any revelation of himself to men? Unless it be naturally known to us, that God is true, what foundation is there for the belief of his Word. And what signify the laws and promises of God, unless natural light do first assure us of his sovereign authority and faithfulness? So that the principles of natural religion, are the foundation of that which is Revealed; and therefore in reason nothing can be admitted to be a revelation from God which plainly contradicts his essential perfections ....." (44-45).

2.....in the imitation of the divine perfections, especially the moral perfections of the divine nature, which the Scripture is wont to comprehend under the name of holiness; and such are the goodness, and mercy, and patience of God, his justice, and truth, and faithfulness." (49-50).

D. THE CRITICISM OF CALVINIST DOCTRINE

Implicit in much of the theological thinking of the seventeenth century was the considered assumption of the primacy of the love of God and of his beneficence toward all his creatures. The so-called "Arminian" churchmen claimed that the divine love was universal and intended that all men could be saved.[63] Jeremy Taylor could write that the love of God is "of universal dissemination," "without respect of persons: for all, being included under the curse of sin, were to him equal and indifferent, undistinguishable objects of mercy."[64] The sinners' response to this love in faith and obedience was possible only by the prevenient grace of God. According

---

63. The designation "Arminian" must be used with caution, the major issues in the Arminian dispute having been fought out in England before the name of Arminius had been heard. Cf. T.M.Parker, "It is unnecessary to look for an Arminian invasion of England, or indeed for any foreign influence, in order to explain the theology of grace characteristic of the anti-Puritan Jacobean and Caroline Anglicans... At the most, the word "Arminian," when applied to such men, can mean that they recognized in Arminius an ally." "Arminianism and Laudianism in Seventeenth Century England, Studies in Church History, eds. Dugmore and Duggan (London: Nelson, 1964), I, 29. Parker is indebted to H.C.Porter's brilliant study, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge (Cambridge, 1958), cf. pp. 281-284, 350-351, chapter XVII passim., pp. 408-409.

64. Works, op.cit., II, 91.
These phrases are from Jeremy Taylor's exposition of the gospel stories of the visitation of the shepherds and wise men which he uses to illustrate the universality of the love of God.

to Taylor, this is "the first principle of our spiritual motion."[65] This grace actuated man's natural powers to decision and then sustained them in obedience. William Tilly, preaching at Oxford in 1702 and 1703 on the text, Philippians 2:12-13, proclaimed the normative "Arminian" teaching on grace and freedom in relation to election. The truth, according to the text, lay between the Pelagians who had "enlarged the liberty of man" beyond all reason and scripture, and Calvin who had "bound up the freedom of the will" and made it completely passive before a selective and irresistible grace. In accord with the Thirteenth Article, Tilly maintained that through the prevarication of Adam, man's natural inclinations "run only to evil." But God, by his gift of prevenient grace, restores to all the original liberty to choose the good.

> The recovery of our liberty was purely the result and effect of God's free grace, at first, and the formal strength and perfection of this liberty, when recovered, is nothing else, but the grace of God preventing us.

This grace neither controls man's freedom nor necessitates his obedience; rather it "places him in such a state of mind...where he may be able to use his liberty well." Hence, "God will not despise our obedience, because it is his own work." That some continue on the way to perdition is not due to a divine decree, but to their "non-compliance," their "defeating and disappointing" his grace.[66]

---

65. Works, 11,92; cf. also Taylor's two sermons "Of Growth in Grace," (XIV,XV), Works, IV, 496-519. It is important also to remember the assumption made with regard to the grace of God given in the sacraments. Cf./Sermons, op.cit., IV, 470. Tillotson

66. Sixteen Sermons upon Several Occasions. (London: Lintott, 1712),pp.226-282. Quotations here in order are from pp.228,232,237,244,246,270,260.
For a note on the importance of these sermons for John Wesley, infra. p.187, note on Sermon 138.

Tillotson drew this same conclusion,

> If we die in our sins, it is not because God would not forgive them, but because we would not repent and be saved; the fault is all our own, and we owe it wholly to ourselves, if we be lost and undone forever. [67]

In this way the main-stream of Anglicanism rejected the more austere Calvinist doctrines which had generally predominated prior to the Restoration; the related doctrines of unconditional predestination, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.[68] The reaction was not merely another indication of an aversion to a system which, in this case, was thought to be obscurantist and which substituted forensic terminology for scriptural reasoning. It was an expression of a very different decision as to the character of God. Whatever confessional position was originally contained in

---

67. Sermons, op.cit., IV, 136.
For the standard reply to the charge of Pelagianism, Tillotson, "But this is Pelagianism, to say that of ourselves we can repent and turn to God. And who says we can of ourselves do this besides the Pelagians? We affirm the necessity of God's grace hereto, and withall, the necessity of our co-operating with the grace of God. We say that without the powerful excitation and aid of God's grace, no man can repent, and turn to God; but we say likewise, that God cannot be properly said to aid and assist those, who do nothing themselves." Ibid. p. 187. Cf. also his sermon, "The Necessity of Supernatural Grace in order to a Christian Life." X,441-464.

68. On the striking overthrow of Calvinism during this period, G.R.Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, op.cit., Chapter II, cf. also, H.R.McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, op.cit., Chapter II.

the Seventeenth Article, the Restoration Church interpreted it in the interests of its own presuppositions: God was primarily loving and his design was for all men to live a holy life and to be restored to their initial perfection. The major Anglican criticism of Calvinism was that it denied this design and served only to destroy man's desire for holiness.

Henry Hammond, a considerable figure during the Commonwealth, began the chapter in his Fundamentals entitled, "Of Christ dying for none but the elect" with these assertions:

> Now for that doctrine of Christ's dying for none but the elect, - i.e., according to the opinion of those which thus teach, for a small remnant of the world, as it is asserted without any pretence or color of Scripture proof, nay, in all opposition to as plain distinct affirmations as can be produced for any article in the Creed, so is it of very ill consequence to the superstructing of the good life. [69]

Tillotson, who would allow that revelation could persuade man of something above and beyond the reach of reason nevertheless held to one interpretative principle:

> We may not admit any thing for a divine revelation, which evidently contradicts and weakens the practice of an holy life; because this is the main end of all divine revelation; and we know God, only in order to the service and imitation of him. [70]

---

69. Miscellaneous Theological Works, op.cit., II, 133-134. Hammond attempts to show how Christ's dying for all men is "manifested by the phrases of the greatest latitude." He gives, as examples, "kosmos," "all," "everyman," "as many as are fallen in Adam and dead through him" (John 4:42, 1 John 2:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 Cor.15:22). He then refers to the Creeds, the Catechism of the Church of England, the Communion Services and the Articles, to support his belief in "universal, but conditional redemption, i.e. of Christ dying for all, if all will take care to perform the condition required by Him and to which His grace is ready to enable him." (134-139). The whole section is also in Anglicanism, op.cit., pp.307-312.

70. Sermons, op.cit., VI, 22.

These were the familiar principles with which the Anglican divines attacked the Calvinist doctrines.

There was, of course, comparatively little attention paid to the conservative intention of Calvin's doctrine of predestination.[71] It was the decree of reprobation which was attacked. The Anglicans according to their presuppositions used the objections which were already ancient. The doctrine of unconditional reprobation denied the essential goodness of God, it made him to be the author of sin, it demoralized his creatures by depriving them of their responsibility under grace.

---

71. It could be argued that the Calvinists misrepresented the Reformer as much as did the Arminians. In the 1559 edition of the Institutes, Calvin retained the doctrine of predestination in a soteriological setting (Inst. III.XXI), but in the several reformulations in Reformed orthodoxy the doctrine was moved from this context to become the head of the system. The influential Theodore Beza, for example, who thought of himself as the guardian of the Institutes, lifted the doctrine to a place of centrality in his schema. For this, Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, Eng. trans. G.T.Thomson (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), pp.147-148. On Beza's importance, John M. Krumm, "Continental Protestantism and Elizabethan Anglicanism (1570-1595)." Reformation Studies in Honor of Roland H. Bainton, ed. Franklin Littell (Richmond, Va: Knox, 1962), pp.129-144.
In the Statutes of the Westminster Assembly (1647) the doctrine appears in the third section, preceded only by the chapters, "Of the Holy Scripture" and "Of God, and of the Holy Trinity." It is followed by IV. "Of Creation," V. "Of Providence," and VI. "Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof." Schaff, Creeds of Christendom (New York: Harper, 1877), III, 600-615. Cf. also Karl Barth's discussion of the place of the doctrine in dogmatics, Church Dogmatics, 11/2, Eng.trans. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1957), pp.76-93; especially on the reformulation in Beza and the Westminster Statutes (77-78), and on his assertion that the Thirty-Nine Articles preserved the intention of Calvin's definitive order (86). Also, E.A.Dowey, The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York: Columbia, 1952), pp. 217ff.

The supralapsarianism as well as the antinomian possibilities logically inherent in the doctrine were to be resisted like the devil. Tillotson, who had a comparatively sympathetic understanding of Calvinism, preached against this doctrine in words which now characterized a tradition:

> If by reprobation be meant, either that God hath decreed, without respect to the sins of men, their absolute ruin and misery; or that he hath decreed that they shall inevitably sin and perish; it cannot be denied, but that such reprobation as this doth clearly overthrow all possible notions of goodness.... But it is said, reprobation is an act of sovereignty in God, and therefore not to be measured by the common rule of goodness. But it is contrary to goodness, and plainly inconsistent with it; and we must not attribute such a sovereignty to God, as contradicts his goodness.... The doctrine of absolute reprobation is no part of the Holy Scriptures, that ever I could find; and there's the rule of our Faith. If some great Divines have held this doctrine, not in opposition to the goodness of God, but hoping they might be reconciled together, let them do it if they can; but if they cannot, rather let the Schools of the greatest Divines be called in question, than the goodness of God, which next to his Being, is the greatest and clearest truth in the world. [72]

With such major premises established, the Arminian consequent, that grace was resistible, was willingly accepted.[73] It followed that the Calvinist doctrine of perseverance had

---

72. Sermons, op.cit., VII, 69-71, cf. also VI, 45f. For a summary of Tillotson's teaching against Calvinism, Louis G. Locke, Tillotson, A Study in Seventeenth Century Literature (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1954), pp. 95-99.

73. Ibid. IV, 167-179. Also George Bull, referring to Phil. 2:12, "In whatever manner you interpret these words of the Apostle, they totally overturn the irresistible operation of grace; for unto what purpose would be this grave exhortation of the Apostle's that we should work out our own salvation, if we could not work?" Harmonia Apostolica. Anglicanism, op.cit., p.313-314.

also to be rejected.[74] As man could resist grace so he could fall from grace and perish everlastingly.

It is true that the Calvinist position, somewhat pilloried in the contemporary statement to the effect that "good works do not further, nor bad works hinder, salvation" could mean a serious depreciation of the meaning of sanctification.[75] But the high Calvinists believed that any concessions made at the point of justification by God's electing grace through faith in the merits of Christ alone would make way for the contamination of Socinianism.[76] Tillotson, in order to make

---

74. C.F.Tillotson, "Others rely upon the sincerity of their repentance and conversion, whereby they are put into a state of grace, from whence they can never finally fall. They did once very heartily repent of their wicked lives, and did change their course, and were really reformed, and continued a great while in that good course. And all this may be certainly true, but it is as certain that they are relapsed into their former evil course: and is so, the prophet hath told us their doom that "if the righteous man forsake his righteousness, his righteousness shall not be remembered; but if the sin that he sinned, in that he shall die." ... And that men may fall from a state of grace, is no matter of discouragement to good men; but a good caution against security and an argument to greater care and watchfulness; according to that of the apostle, "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall;" which admonition were surely to little purpose, if it were impossible for them that stand to fall." Sermons, op.cit., V, 338-339. Also the sermon, "The Danger of Apostacy from Christianity" (Heb. 6:4-6), V, 155-196.

75. C.E.Whiting, Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1660-1688 (London: S.P.C.K., 1931), p.268.

76. C.R.Cragg, Puritanism in the Age of the Great Persecution (Cambridge, 1957), p. 254.

his position absolutely clear, risked the following rejoinder:

> I do not intend to plead for any error, but I would not have Christianity chiefly measured by matters of opinion. I know no such error and heresy as a wicked life. That man believes the Gospel best, who lives most according to it. Though no man can have a worse opinion of the Socinian doctrine than I have, yet I had rather a man should deny the satisfaction of Christ; than believe it, and abuse it to the encouragement of sin. Of the two, I have more hopes of him that denies the divinity of Christ, and lives otherwise soberly, and righteously, and godly in the world, than of the man who owns Christ to be the Son of God, and lives like the child of the devil. [77]

The antinomian doctrine which shadowed this whole debate was "the most pernicious heresy, directly destructive of the great end and design of Christianity."[78] The possible extensions inherent in the Calvinists' doctrines denied the very bases of Anglican piety.

E. JOHN LOCKE AND SAMUEL CLARKE: A SUMMATION

The seventeenth century ended and the next century began under the dominating influence of John Locke's philosophy and Isaac Newton's science. Although Locke cannot be considered as an orthodox church-man of the Anglican tradition, his work crystallized the new direction it was taking. Further, it posited the dilemnas with which eighteenth-century apologists

---

77. Sermons, op.cit., XII, 294.

78. Ibid. IV, 110-111.
Cf. Gertrude Huens, Antinomianism in English History (London: Cresset, 1951) and C. E. Whiting, op.cit. pp. 267ff.

and evangelists would have to wrestle. His treatise, "The Reasonableness of Christianity as delivered in the Scriptures" (1695) was an essay on the nature of faith.[79]

The preface reveals the programmatic character of the work in that it reflects both a reaction to sectarianism and something of the advanced spirit of the age.

> The little satisfaction and consistency that is to be found, in most systems of divinity I have met with, made me betake myself to the sole reading of the Scriptures (to which they all appeal) for the understanding the Christian religion..... If, upon a fair and unprejudiced examination, thou findest I have mistaken the sense and tenor of the Gospel, I beseech thee, as a true Christian, in the spirit of the Gospel, (which is that of charity,) and in the words of sobriety, set me right, in the doctrine of salvation.[80]

The sense of God's design is immediately established in the opening lines where Locke employs the Adam-Christ motif.

> It is obvious to any one, who read the New Testament, that the doctrine of redemption, and consequently of the gospel, is founded upon the supposi-

---

79. In his preface to a Second Vindication of the treatise, Locke reflects: "The beginning of the year in which it was published, the controversy that made so much noise and heat amongst some of the dissenters, coming one day accidentally into my mind, drew me, by degrees, into a stricter and more thorough inquiry into the question about justification. The scripture was direct and plain, that it was faith that justified: the next question then, was, What faith that was that justified; what it was which, if a man believed, it should be imputed to him for righteousness? To find this out, I thought the right way was, to search the scriptures; and thereupon betook myself seriously to the reading of the New Testament, only to that purpose. What that produced, you and the world have seen." The Works of John Locke in Ten Volumes, 10th Ed. (London, 1801), VII, 186-187.

80. Ibid. VII, 3.

> tion of Adam's fall. To understand therefore, what we are restored to by Jesus Christ, we must consider what the scriptures show we lost by Adam. [81]

The meaning of salvation then is contained in the truth of Romans 5:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.[82] Locke works through this theme with an abundance of proof-texting, but with scarcely a reference to the dogmatic formulations of the Church. As his preface indicated, he preferred to ignore systematic treatments of the subject in favor of his own presuppositions concerning the fundamentals of Christianity.

Locke's analysis of faith is thoroughly epistemological. Faith is primarily a belief in a revealed doctrine, an assent to the biblical promise, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." (John 3:36). It is a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, risen from the dead and guaranteed objectively by prophecies and miracles.[83] To the possible objection "that to believe only that Jesus is the Messiah is but an historical, and not a justifying, or saving faith" Locke shows his despair of such systematic distinctions:

> I allow to the makers of systems and their followers to invent and use what distinctions they please, and to call things by what names they think fit. But I cannot allow to them, or to any man, an

---

81. Ibid. p. 4.

82. Ibid. pp. 6-9.

83. Having set down this text and also John 4:24, 26, 39, 40-42, Locke concludes, "By which it is plain, that believing on the Son is the believing that Jesus was the Messiah; giving credit to the miracles he did, and the profession he made of himself....And an assent to that was what distinguished believers from unbelievers." (p. 17).

> authority to make a religion for me, or to alter that which God hath revealed. And if they please to call the believing that which our Saviour and his apostles preached, and proposed alone to be believed, an historical faith; they have their liberty. But they must have a care, how they deny it to be a justifying or saving faith, when our Savious and his apostles have declared it so to be; and taught no other which men should receive, and whereby they should be made believers unto eternal life: unless they can so far make bold with our Saviour, for the sake of their beloved systems, as to say, that he forgot what he came into the world for; and that he and his apostles did not instruct people right in the way and mysteries of salvation. [84]

To the criticism that he brings no tidings of evangelical faith Locke rests on a phrase which is not really developed in his exposition:

> It is not enough to believe him to be the Messiah, unless we also obey his laws, and take him to be our king to reign over us. [85]

But the assent character of faith still predominates when a distinction is made between the faith of a believer and the faith of a devil. The distinction does not depend upon the nature of faith but on repentance as the second condition of the covenant.[86]

---

84. Ibid. p. 101-102.

85. Ibid. p. 120 (my italics), cf. also pp. 285-286, 414. His extended definition of faith in the Second Vindication reads accordingly, "He that believes him to be the promised Messiah, takes Jesus for his King, and repenting of his former sins, sincerely resolves to live, for the future, in obedience to his laws, is a subject of his kingdom, is a Christian." (352).

86. "Though the devils believed (James 2:19), yet they could not be saved by the covenant of grace; because they performed not the other condition required in it, altogether as necessary to be performed as this of believing; and that is repentance. Repentance is as absolute a condition of the covenant of grace as faith; and as necessary to be performed as that." (103).

> These two, faith and repentance, i.e. believing Jesus to be the Messiah, and a good life, are the indispensable conditions of the new covenant, to be performed by all those who would obtain eternal life. [87]

Locke gave five reasons for Christ's coming among men. He came to make the one God known to man whose natural senses were marred by ignorance or lust, to reveal man's duty and the true character of his worship, to encourage him to a virtuous life and finally, to assure him of divine assistance.[88] But there is no development of a doctrine of the atonement, and little attention is actually paid to the meaning of justification. It does not appear that the man of faith is a new creature who acknowledges his creaturehood as by the sole mercy of God in Christ. John Dillenberger's general comment on the Messianic thinking of this period is particularly true of Locke:

> The Messiah had himself become an object of ordinary knowledge and demonstration. He was no longer in the first instance the source of that new life which transformed old relations. [89]

In avoiding the dialectic of the earlier theologies, Locke was intent on a reduction to his own conception of biblical simplicity. He maintained that the written word of God is "a collection of writings, designed by God for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind, in the way of salvation."[90] There-

---

87. Ibid. p. 105.

88. Ibid. pp. 135-151.

89. Protestant Thought and Natural Science, op. cit. p. 146.

90. Works VII, 5, also the concluding lines of the treatise (p.158) to which reference has already been made. Note 39 supra.

fore, they are to be understood "in the plain direct meaning of the words and phrases" and "without such learned, artificial, and forced senses of them as are sought out, and put upon them, in most of the systems of divinity."[91] Locke's assumption as to the simplicity of Christianity led him to separate the gospels and the Acts from the epistles, the direct teaching of Jesus from the more elaborate, though less necessary opinions of his convinced followers. The gospels provide the key to the simplicity of the divine purpose and this constitutes the inherent unity of the scripture.

> God, out of the infiniteness of his mercy, has dealt with man, as a compassionate and tender Father. He gave him reason, and with it the law: that could not be otherwise than what reason should dictate: unless we should think, that a reasonable creature should have an unreasonable law. But, considering the frailty of man, apt to run into corruption and misery, he promised a Deliverer, whom in his good time he sent; and then declared to all mankind, that whoever would believe him to be the Saviour promised, and take him now raised from the dead, and constituted the Lord and Judge of all men, to be their King and Ruler, should be saved. This is a plain intelligible proposition; and the all-merciful God seems herein to have consulted the poor of this world, and the bulk of mankind.[92]

---

91. Ibid. p. 5.

92. Ibid. p. 154. Locke's principle of interpretation presupposes this inherent unity, and sets a pattern for biblical criticism. Referring to the Epistles he writes, "We must look into the drift of the discourse, observe the coherence and connexion of the parts, and see how it is consistent with itself and other parts of scripture; if we will conceive it right. We must not cull out, as best suits our system, here and there a period or verse; as if they were all distinct and independent aphorisms; and make these the fundamental articles of the christian faith, and necessary to salvation; unless God has made them so (152). For Locke's distinction between the intention of the Epistles and Gospels, pp.152-158. On Locke's attitude to the Bible, G.R.Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, pp.130-132.

Locke, in his time, was the one who radically simplified the deposit of faith while, as he believed, still defending the true nature of Christianity. For him, revelation was above reason, but it was, above all, reasonable. It is apparent that he was wielding a two-edged sword. His appeal to reasonableness, even as an apology against the Deists,[93] would be as damaging as it was supportive of the true nature of faith. His independence of the dogmatic forms furthered the cause of natural religion and in fact inspired both deists and sceptics. The fundamentals which were once recognized and revered as super-natural were now conceived as being rational. Whatever sense of mystery Locke managed to retain after his attempt to purge away the irrationalities of tradition was swept away by John Toland's "Christianity not Mysterious," which was published at the end of the century.

In the formulation of the problem of reason and revelation, the mantle of Locke was taken up by the theologian and metaphysician, Samuel Clarke (1675-1729). Clarke delivered the Boyle Lectures in 1704 and 1705 and in them he "endeavoured to lay firmly the first foundations of religion,

---

93. Ibid. pp. 189f.

in the certainty of the existence and attributes of God."[94] Clarke, following Locke, argued for the necessity of revelation over against the position of the deists,[95] but his conclusion had now become familiar:

> It is abundantly evident that men are not called to believe the Christian religion without very reasonable and sufficient proof; much less are they required to set up faith in opposition to reason; or to believe anything for that very reason, because it is incredible.[96]

---

94. The first series was entitled, "A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, more particularly in answer to Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, and their followers." The second series, "A Discourse concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation."

    The edition of Clarke's second series of discourses used is found in, Richard Watson, A Collection of Theological Tracts, in Six Volumes (London: Nichols, 1785). This quotation is from the beginning of this series where Clarke is recounting the main tenets of the first discourses, IV (109).

    Roland Stromberg, Religious Liberalism, op.cit., writes of Clarke, "He was disliked by both High-Churchmen and deists, as he carried on the mild spirit of via media which had originated with his masters, the Cambridge Platonists. His rationalism was thoroughgoing; he attempted to prove the existence of God and to derive morality from reason, and he made a sensation at Cambridge when for his D.D. he defended the thesis that 'no article of the Christian faith is opposed to right reason.'" (43).

    For a summary of Clarke's arguments, Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. V. Hobbes to Hume, (Maryland: Newman, 1961), pp. 157-163. Cf. also The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, ed. H.G. Alexander (Manchester, 1956).

95. Watson edition, op.cit. pp. 115-117, 208-210.

96. Ibid. p. 289.

Clarke assumed that he had demonstrated, on grounds of reason and revelation, the existence of God, the character of his perfections, and the harmony of the natural order. Everything else, including the objective distinctions between good and evil, could be read off this knowledge.[97] It followed that religion, in its reasonableness must necessarily exalt moral virtue.[98] Two paragraphs from the second series of discourses will serve to show both the method and direction of his thought:

> All the credenda, or doctrines, which the Christian religion teaches (that is, not only those plain doctrines which it requires to be believed as fundamental and of necessity to eternal salvation, but even all the doctrines which it teaches as matters of truth), are in the first place, though indeed many of them not discoverable by bare reason unassisted with revelation, yet, when discovered by revelation, apparently most agreeable to sound and unprejudiced reason.
>
> In the next place; every one of these doctrines has a natural tendency, and a direct and powerful influence, to reform men's lives, and correct their manners. This is the great end, and ultimate design, of all true religion; and it is a very great and fatal mistake, to think that any doctrine or any belief whatsoever can be otherwise of any benefit to men, than as it is fitted to promote to this main end. 99

---

97. Ibid. pp. 239f. "What can be a more necessary and excellent foundation of true religion, than that doctrine which the Christian religion clearly and distinctly teaches us, concerning the nature and attributes of the one only true God." (239).

98. "I have been the longer upon this head, because moral virtue is the foundation and the sum, the essence and the life, of all true religion: for the security whereof, all positive institution was principally designed: for the restoration whereof, all revealed religion was ultimately intended: and inconsistent wherewith, or in opposition to which, all doctrines whatsoever, supported by what pretence of reason or authority whatsoever, are as certainly and necessarily false, as God is true." (164).

99. Ibid. p. 239.

Basil Willey is correct in saying that writers like Locke and Clarke "did not abandon revelation, but with them the center of gravity has shifted, and revelation has become an adjunct, not a first consideration."[100] Clarke appears to be more conservative at this point than Locke. For Locke, revelation becomes a re-publication of the truths which right reason could discover and is necessary only for the simple and the blind. The man of reason could dispense with such an avenue of knowledge. But in both these writers one looks in vain for a qualitative distinction between revealed and natural religion. Perhaps it was not for nothing that the Christologies of both men were called into question.[101] A consequence was that moral theology could now be interpreted in secular terms. In spite of Clarke's best intentions, his epistemology could easily promote a morality without faith. An ethics which is grounded upon an ontological sense of "the fitness of things" can exist independently of divine assistance.

With this brief reference to Samuel Clarke, the consideration of the Restoration period may be terminated. Some of the chief motifs in the theology of Anglicanism have been explored and now some reflective comments may be in order.

---

100. The Eighteenth Century Background (Boston: Beacon, 1961 edn.) p. 59.

101. Locke was accused of Socinianism by Bishop Stillingfleet, and Clarke was charged with unitarianism on the basis of his "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity." (1712), which initiated the Arian debate at this time. Cf. John Hunt, Religious Thought in England, (London: Strahan, 1870-1873), II, 248-250 and Norman Sykes, Church and State, op.cit., pp. 348,353f.

F. SOME REFLECTIONS

Any attempt to show a pattern of theological thought by citing a few selections from an extensive literature is bound to be a hazardous project. The risk, in this case, has been somewhat alleviated by the self-conscious consistency of the Restoration leaders. Admitting that no age is without its traditionalists and rebels, it has been found that the men of the *via media*, in a time of acute crisis, adhered to a methodology which informed the content of their thought and achieved a coherency which is distinctive of the Anglican tradition.

The religious controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England were followed by a period of marked theological liberalism. The post-Restoration Church, although allegedly dependent upon its doctrinal heritage, was ever-mindful of the pressures of a new era.

In many respects the Christian society had sponsored the new scientific movement; the Church having contributed both its sanction and its leaders. If there were discrepancies it was because the new age had dawned before the divines had time to fashion an enlightened apologetic for their nominal orthodoxy. Theological coherency could still be found in a recalcitrant traditionalism, but it was more likely to be found in a diminishing residue of fundamentals informed, if not transformed, by the order of empirical investigation.

There was a vigorous attempt to retain scriptural revelation and natural religion in some form of coincident relationship. Faith and reason were held together as correlatives

within a unified concept of reality. Churchmen, as theologians and as scientists, claimed this reality to be the existence of God whose creative design was revealed in Scripture, discerned in nature, and everywhere accessible to right reason.

On the surface it seemed that the Anglican tradition was continuing to affirm the primary authority of the Scriptures. The basic questions were still being dealt with in biblical terms but, as Gerald Cragg has clearly shown, scriptural orthodoxy was now on the defensive. Referring to the status of the Bible at the end of the century, Cragg writes:

> Men spoke of its authority with a reverence seemingly as great as that of the Puritans themselves, but the reader is left with an uncomfortable suspicion that they protested too much. An earlier age had believed without question that the Scriptures were a final and absolute standard of truth. All other issues were tested by reference to that sovereign norm. At the end of the seventeenth century, most writers make the same profession, but they vindicated the Scriptures by referring them to another standard - that of reason. "Reason," said Locke, "must be our last judge and guide in everything." He and his contemporaries agreed that the Scriptures accorded with the canons of sound reason; the fact remains that the Bible was no longer the final and absolute standard. However it might stand the test, it had to be brought to the bar of another court.[102]

Reason, which had once been faithfully defined as "the candle of the Lord," the faculty illuminated by the Spirit, was now becoming another name for the common sense of all rational men. The existence of God could be demonstrated rationally by a redefined teleological argument. The teleology apparent in creation proved the power, wisdom and purpose of God. The divine

---

102. From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, op.cit., p. 228.

design was, above all, reasonable, and could therefore be intuited without the actuality of a special revelation. The Scriptures had no absolute claim or necessary priority. In fact, the Bible which could be considered as a handbook of that knowledge which was possible from a proper study of the natural world, became vulnerable to similar means of verification. The Bible was no longer received on its own terms.

Again it appears that theologians were still rehearsing the credal "fundamentals." However, there was an urge to further simplicity, and a general refusal to be burdened with those doctrinal minutiae which the sectarians had accumulated. Religion was reasonable and universal. It could be comprehended by all because it was intended for all. It was not designed for disputation but in order to present man perfect; charity and toleration were essential virtues. The question which arises is whether, at the end of the century, the "fundamentals" of the Church's tradition had been replaced by a new set. The Church, in dialogue with the new intellectual current, seemed more inclined to stress reasonableness, charity and simplicity as the proper marks of the Christian faithm. The common quest for the rational meant that the mystery of faith, which was once the subject of the fundamental doctrines of salvation, was either by-passed or neglected. The mysteries which did remain, as truths of revelation, were no longer accepted without question.

The attributes of God, his design and his providence had been confirmed to the satisfaction of both deist and orthodox.

There was also general agreement, on the basis of natural or revealed religion, that God's benevolence or love was his sovereign perfection. But although the Johannine affirmation, "God is love" is foremost, the essential Christological ground for this claim was largely ignored. (1 John 4:9-10, 15-16).

To think of God as a Deus absconditus who had turned away from man in his wrath was to degrade the Almighty; to conceive of his having wrestled with Jacob tended to vulgarity.[103] Such morbidity and particularity, which incidentally called much of the Old Testament into serious question, were to be rejected by men of latitude. The Platonists' understanding of religion as union or deiformity, and the later tendency to humanize the ways of God to man, bridged the abyss between the righteous creator and his creature. The "once-born" believer, who faithfully observed the instituted means of grace, could live without any sense of disjunction, and indeed, with little sense of sin. Basil Willey generalizes on this disposition and the concessions it made:

> Speaking broadly, we are confronted, on approaching the eighteenth century, with a steady decline in what has been called the tragic sense of life. We have gone on too long, it was felt, repeating that we are miserable offenders, and that there is no health in us. We must change these notes to something more cheerful, something more befitting a polite and civilized age... Exorcize from religion, therefore, its sombre and tragic elements - its jealous and offended God, its conviction of sin; put in place of Jehovah the Supreme Being,

---

103. Stromberg, op.cit., p. 56.

> in whom there is no darkness at all, and see in Adam's posterity a race who would always have loved the highest if only designing priests had not prevented them from seeing it. Against the Deus absconditus, the Dieu irrité of Pascal, Shaftesbury puts forward a deity who is "the best natured Being in the world." "What a charming Idea does he give us of the Deity," says Collins of Tillotson: "it is alone sufficient without any further argument to make the Atheist wish there were a Deity." [104]

Whether or not Anthony Collins was altogether just in his remark on Tillotson's preaching, the sermons of the Archbishop reveal the common presuppositions for theological and moral thinking. The surest reasonings in religion were grounded upon an understanding of the perfections of God, and the practice of religion consisted in the imitation of these perfections. This sequence of thought meant that a doctrine of salvation was contained within a theology of creation and the natural order. Salvation was generally described as the renewing of the divine image which had been marred at the Fall and comprised a restoration of man to his original endowment or to the initial state of holiness and happiness. This most common formulation echoed a patristic and platonic heritage and characterized the coherency of Anglican soteriology. The assumed Christocentricity of the doctrine of faith in the Homilies had been displaced by a preoccupation with the perfections and design of God.

It was assumed, according to the prevailing Anselmic view, that God's wrath had been satisfied by the completed work of Christ. Because of his suffering and death, God had turned

---

104. Eighteenth Century Background, op.cit., pp. 10-11.

toward all men. He had offered the possibility of salvation to all and his commandments were no longer grievous. It was not apparent that the benefits of Christ's passion were still being applied. Christ was featured as the "grand Exemplar," the historical rather than the present saviours of mankind. Belief in his Messiahship, as Locke made clear, was essential, but there was neither embarassment nor benefit from a Messianic confrontation. Tillotson listened to this sort of criticism in his own day and his reply should be heard:

> I foresee what will be said, because I have so often heard it said in the like case, that there is not one word of Jesus Christ in all this. No more is there in the text, (Titus 3:2), and yet I hope that Jesus Christ is truly preached whenever His will, and the laws and the duties enjoined by the Christian religion are inculcated upon us. [105]

The atoning work of Christ could still be reduced to a point of irrelevance.

The doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer was subordinated by those who were moving intentionally from forensic interpretations. The antinomian possibilities were to be avoided at all cost. But the main fact is that, of necessity, natural religion could not deal with the central doctrines of Christianity which have to do with the mediation of Jesus to redeem sinful man.[106] Faith had

---

105. Quoted by S.C.Carpenter, Eighteenth Century Church and People (London: Murray, 1959), p.26. It appears in The Works of the Most Reverend John Tillotson, in Ten Volumes (Edinburgh: 1772), III, 21. (Carpenter gives as his reference Works III, 275, which edition I am unable to identify).

106. Cf. Westfall, op.cit., p. 118.

consequently been removed from a fiduciary setting and was generally defined as an assent to the knowledge or revelation of God's nature and the design of his purpose in the world.[107]

The sequence of thought associated with "reasonable religion" did not imply an indifference to morality. On the contrary, the second essential mark of the Christian life, following faith, was the obedience proclaimed as "practical Christianity." Tillotson and Clarke used words which had become the common property of an age when they said that the holy life was "the great end, and ultimate design of all true religion." Alexander Pope epitomized a position which was as reactionary as it was positive:

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.
> In faith and Hope the world will disagree
> But all mankind's concern is charity.
> All must be false that thrawt this one great end,
> And all of God that bless mankind or mend.[108]

---

107. The definition of faith as "recumbence" or "reliance" was rejected by Bishop Bull as one of the "sad propositions" of the antinomians. He states the position he is criticizing in a Sermon, "The Necessity of Works of Righteousness," (Hosea 10:12):
"That the faith whereby we are justified, is nothing else but a recumbence, or reliance upon Christ, or (which is a worse definition) that it is only a firm belief and persuasion, that our sins are already pardoned, and we already justified; and consequently, that the justification spoken of in Scripture is nothing else but the sense and knowledge of our justification past, decreed from eternity: that Christ obeyed the law, and suffered in our persons, and that his righteousness is formally ours, and consequently that there is no necessity of any righteousness in ourselves in order to salvation .... and consequently, that all our good works are (after a sort) works of supererogation, to which no necessity obligeth us, but only gratitude freely inclines us." Some Important Points of Primitive Christianity, ed. Nelson (Oxford, 1816), 1,8, also Henry Hammond, op.cit., II,129-133.

108. An Essay on Man, III, 305-310.

From Jeremy Taylor to Tillotson, Bull and Clarke it was claimed that obedience along with faith was a condition of salvation. For Hooker they had been "inseparable mates," but now the claim had a different basis. For the Latitudinarian theologians the moral imperative derived from a knowledge of the divine perfections, and obedience was the imitation of divine beneficence. It, therefore, had the form of love. If there was some equivocation on the nature of the faith by which a man is justified, there was no doubt that faith, however defined, could not expect salvation apart from love.

This is not to infer that the preaching and writing of divines like Taylor and Tillotson can be dismissed as mere exercises in moral theology. The Christian life of faith and obedience was enabled by the gracious, energizing presence of God. Grace was conferred preveniently and sacramentally and was claimed to be absolutely necessary to the beginning and continuation of the life of holiness. Nevertheless the shades of semi-Pelagianism inevitably fall on all attempts to assert that obedience is a condition of salvation. In their attempts to counteract a brand of solifidianism which implied the complete passivity of faith, the divines tended to reinstate both the fides formata and the notion of a final justification which had been rejected by the Reformers. The danger they sought to prevent was antinomianism whether as a logical or an actual possibility. This was considered a greater threat than any dogmatic inconsistency. If departures were to be made from theological precision they were to be made in favor of

the biblical injunction, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." This, in part, explains the merging of justification and sanctification in a way which was nearer to the spirit of Catholic theology than to the fundamental distinctions of the Cranmerian Homilies. Justification was conceived as a process rather than a crisis as it had to do with a growth in grace and the being perfected in love toward God and man.

Without a proper understanding of the Christology of faith, the casuistry of the divines could be reduced to a moralism, and without an understanding of the benefits of Christ it could impose the demands of a pharisaical legalism. For without a doctrine of redemption in which Jesus Christ is the object of both justifying and sanctifying faith, the way of holiness remains a way under the law. Of course, the confidence of man's developing knowledge and an optimism in regard to progress, may for a time hide the truth rediscovered by the Reformers. But if such optimism was penetrated or lost, and if casuistry still insisted upon a rigorous precision of behavior, then the <u>scala perfectionis</u> would become a burden for human striving.

PART TWO

THE NATURE OF LOVE AND FAITH IN THE FORMATIVE PERIOD OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE: THE SHAPING OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY

Introduction

The theological scene of Restoration England was the immediate background for John Wesley's doctrinal development. Without some knowledge of this period and its teaching on "the nature and design" of religion it is impossible to appreciate fully his own early thinking on the meaning of the Gospel. Without this background it is also impossible to comprehend the deep uneasiness which characterized Wesley's early missionary ventures and his recognition of the inadequacy of his message. Following his discovery of a new starting-point, his mature thought also can best be understood partly as a corroboration of this legacy and partly as a criticism of it in the light of an older Anglican tradition. This is not to exclude the influence of the Continental Reformers but to suggest that even the specific impact of Martin Luther, as critical as it was, was nevertheless momentary. The mature Wesley returned to his own tradition which had once, of course, been tutored from Wittenberg and Geneva, for confirmation and doctrinal authority.

V.H.H. Green, with his native knowledge of the University, has rendered valuable service to Wesley studies with his account of the academic life at Oxford in the early years of the eighteenth century. He relates how the religious life there drew its

nourishment from patristic studies which had been so important for the previous century and from a theological and catholic tradition which had embraced both Hooker and Laud.[1] John Wesley's own reading was by no means confined to divinity or philosophy, but the names of Pearson, Jeremy Taylor, Tillotson, Beveridge and Bull, of Sprat, Boyle and Ray, and of Locke and Clarke, are among those which appear in the Oxford diaries.[2] Through this reading Wesley would have become acquainted with the main-stream of Anglican theology and piety and also with those methodological questions upon which orthodoxy was called to defend.

In the first part of this work the theology of Restoration Anglicanism was dealt with but with little mention of Puritanism. However, in the light of Wesley's ancestry and also his subsequent indebtedness, it would be disingenuous to proceed without reference to the possible influence of Puritan divinity on the young Wesley. While at Oxford he did read some works by Baxter and Calamy as well as Isaac Watts' treatise on predestination.[3] But there is nothing in his early writings to suggest that he was conscious of any particular debt to these great figures.[4]

---

1. The Young Mr. Wesley (London: Arnold, 1961), p. 28.

2. Ibid., pp. 29,274f. For Green's reading list based upon the Diaries, pp.305-319.

3. Ibid., pp. 306,315. In 1754, upon reading Calamy's Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life, Wesley wrote, "In spite of all the prejudice of education, I could not but see that the poor Nonconformists had been used without either justice or mercy." Journal IV,93 (my underlining).

4. Cf. Frank Baker's article, "Wesley's Puritan Ancestry," The London Quarterly and Holborn Review 187 (1962), pp.180-186, especially p.184. See note 12, infra. An exception to the above statement would be the hymns of Isaac Watts which were included in Wesley's first Hymn-book- A Collection of Psalms and Hymns (Charlestown, 1737).

"Practical divinity" was just as much the concern of Anglican piety as it was of Puritanism, granted that the basis of casuistry may have been different. Wesley concentrated upon the seventeenth-century high-churchmen and the latitudinarians, and he became an able student of the Fathers and, for a time, of the mystic writers. His early leaning toward practical divinity, encouraged of course by his mother, has its roots in these sources. His theology and practice in this formative period fell naturally within the thought-forms bequeathed by the Anglicans of the preceeding century.

Wesley was a student when the Anglican tradition was dominated by the assumption that revealed theology could be perpetuated only within the framework of a broader view of reality to which reason attended. The Church was not thereby separated from the world but rather its regula fidei was in serious danger of being assimilated or confused in an apology addressed to the spirit of a new age. Sacramental practice and traditional piety stood over against the process of secularization, but even here the prevailing anthropocentricity tended to preciousness and individualism. In this situation John Wesley studied, doubted and debated. Alternating between seclusion and service, he attempted to fulfill all righteousness.

The task now is to provide an account of Wesley's own understanding of the design of Christianity in this situation and in the formative period of his theological thinking.

The formative period of Wesley's theological life can be described as beginning with his preparation for ordination to the diaconate in 1725 and as concluding with his return from

Germany and Holland in September of 1738.

It is clear that Wesley's decision to enter Holy Orders was a critical one which evidenced the beginning of a new seriousness in his life and thought. His family background had insured his being a capable biblical and theological student but, with this resolution, his learning became focused primarily upon the demands of his calling and the responsibilities of his ministry.

The choice of the concluding date for this period requires a more detailed explanation. The year of 1738 was marked by a series of crises in which Wesley struggled to understand and appropriate the meaning and assurance of faith. He had returned from Georgia in February of that year bewildered by his personal inadequacies as a missionary and yet still impelled by the evangelical task (W.VIII, 227).[5] During that same month he came

---

5. The sources for references from the writings of Wesley which are cited within the text and the method of citation are the following:
The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. Curnock, 8 vols. (London: Epworth, 1909-1916). Hereinafter cited as "J" with volume and page.
The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. Telford, 8 vols. (London: Epworth, 1931). Hereinafter cited as "L" with volume and page.
The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., Third Edition, ed. Jackson, (London: Mason, 1829-1831). See also The Works of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958-1959), a reprint of the Jackson Edition. Hereinafter cited as "W" with volume and page.
For the convenience of the reader, all sermons will be cited from the Jackson Edition of the Works as printed in volumes V, VI and VII. His numbering (1-141) will be retained. Sermons will be cited by this number, section and paragraph, followed by volume and page. It should be noted that the authoritative numbering of the forty-four Standard Sermons and nine additional sermons by E.H.Sugden (1-53) varies from the Jackson order. For a comparison of the Jackson and Sugden enumeration, see Sugden, Wesley's Standard Sermons (London: Epworth, 1921) 1,12. Other Wesley sources used will be cited as footnotes.

under the influence of Peter Böhler (J.1,436). In numerous conversations Böhler crystalized doctrinally the faith, assurance and piety of the Moravians who had already impressed Wesley during the mission to Georgia. The strength of their position was such that the despairing Wesley could only think of their teaching as a "new gospel." So his faith was called into question (J.1,471). He turned, with his urgent doubts to the scriptures, to the teachings of the Church and to some of his friends, among them, William Law. He sought for some criticism or corroboration of the doctrine of salvation by faith in and through Christ alone. Convinced theologically, he preached this message and found himself rejected (J.1,456, 460,462,464). Then, toward the end of May, the doctrine was confirmed in Wesley's experience and chiefly under the auspices of his own tradition (J.1,472-479; L.1,262-265).

Although Wesley still had to learn that the assurance of faith was not the fullness of faith, his theology of salvation now included all those ingredients which belong to a protestant understanding of the nature of the Gospel. Keeping to a resolution which he had made in Georgia, and in order to be further confirmed, Wesley set out on a journey to the Moravian communities in Germany. There he discussed his questions on the nature of faith and on the order and relation of justification, assurance and regeneration. He was instructed also by the piety which he found there. He returned to London in September ready to face the claims of his ministry once again. An ambiguous chapter in the life of Wesley had closed and a

new chapter, to be marked by the determination of faith, was about to begin.[6]

The procedure now is two-fold. Firstly, some specific sources which may be regarded as having shaped Wesley's early theology will be examined. Some of these sources were Anglican while others represented diverse forms of Christian belief and practice and served dialogically in relation to the tradition in which Wesley was being nurtured. Secondly, attention will be paid to Wesley's own doctrinal formulations in this period as they have to do with the knowledge of God and his purpose and, consequently, with the nature of love and faith.

It can be argued that from 1725 Wesley was a theologian who was attempting to respond to the claims of the love of God and to realize his calling by proclaiming the way of love and holiness as the proper obedience of the Christian. If this assertion is accurate, the critical questions will concern the

---

6. This date as the terminus ad quem is supported by Wesley's two extracts from the Journal which cover these years. Part of the title of the first extract reads, "From his embarking for Georgia to his Return to London." (meaning his return on February 1st, 1738). (J.1,81). The second extract has the description, "From the arrival in England to the return from Germany." Owing probably to the vagaries of Wesley's printer, the contents of the second extract do not quite fulfill this title. The extract ends on August 12th rather than on September 16th, 1738. Curnock, however, has expanded the second part to fulfill Wesley's intention. Cf. Curnock's explanations (J.1,428 and 11,66).

sources of Wesley's understanding of the primacy of love and the nature of faith. What were the predominant reasons for his frustration and despair? What was the character of faith which he realized in the liberating events of 1738? What reciprocal change did this liberation imply for his understanding of the design of the Christian life? Having sought solutions to these questions in the writings of the young Wesley, it will then be possible to consider his mature thought which built upon what was fixed and what was discovered during these years.

It should be stated that the intention is not to write another biography of the young Wesley or even to attempt a theological biography. This territory has been thoroughly traversed by competent historians.[7] Although biographical details cannot and should not be excluded, the aim here is to concentrate upon the design of Wesley's developing soteriology, and upon his understanding of the nature of love and faith as the basic correlative elements in this design.

A. THE BEGINNINGS OF A MINISTRY

On the 19th September, 1725, John Wesley was ordained a deacon at Christ Church Cathedral by Dr. Potter, Bishop

---

7. The standard works are still, Luke Tyerman, The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., 3 vols. (New York: Harper, 1872). Vol. I takes the history through 1747. John S. Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies (London: Epworth, 1921).
More recently, V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley (London: Arnold, 1961) and Martin Schmidt, John Wesley, A Theological Biography, trans. Norman Goldhawk (London: Epworth, 1962) Vol. 1.

of Oxford.[8] His decision to take Holy Orders was made only after a careful consideration of the importance of the ministry and an examination of his own qualifications. His father initially had offered warnings rather than encouragement. As one who had some knowledge of clerical apostacy, Samuel set down his own position in the traditional terms of Anglican piety:

> The principle spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God, and the service of his Church in the edification of our neighbor. And woe to him, who, with any meaner leading view, attempts so sacred a work.[9]

His mother, who appreciated the new seriousness which she detected in her son, was more purposive:

> In good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary: All things besides are comparatively little to the purpose of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears, than can be met within a tragedy.[10]

---

8. He was priested, also by Dr. Potter, on September 22nd, 1728.

9. The Arminian Magazine, Vol.1,1778, p.29. This was the first letter,dated January 26th, 1725, which Wesley printed in the Magazine. His introduction to these letters shows their significance for his own development: "It is natural to hope, that what has been of use to ourselves, may be of use to others also. I may then be excused for beginning this Collection of Letters, with some that were of use to me many years ago." p.28.

10. February 23rd, 1725 in Henry Moore, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., 2 vols. (London: Kershaw, 1824-1825), 1,123. Tyerman prints a further paragraph in which Mrs. Wesley states her preference for reading in "practical divinity." "Mr. Wesley differs from me, and would engage you, I believe, in critical learning, which, though accidentally of use, is in nowise preferable to the other." Tyerman, 1,32.

Samuel then wrote again, this time urging his son to enter orders and promising his assistance.[11] So with his parents' solemn advice and support Wesley began a ministry which was to inspire the people called Methodists and influence a nation. It commenced with an act of self-dedication and, as Wesley acknowledged in later years, an earnest desire to follow the way of holiness (J.1,467). His decision had been nourished and would continue to be informed by both personal and literary sources. An analysis of these sources should begin with an examination of the theological influence of his parents, especially as it bears on those questions with which this work is concerned.

B. THE THEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE OF JOHN WESLEY'S PARENTS

John Wesley was born into a family which was steeped in the rich, but diverse, strands of the heritage of Protestant England. The confluence of High-Church, Non-conformist and lingering Puritan elements in the Wesley and Annesley families would seemingly make it difficult to assess their proportionate influence on their most famous offspring. Some scholars, for example, have concluded that the Rectory at Epworth was essen-

---

11. Letter, March 13th, 1725 in George Stevenson, Memorials of the Wesley Family (London: Partridge and New York: Nelson, 1876), p. 121.
On September 7th of that year Samuel wrote, "God fit you for your great work! Fast, watch, and pray; love, endure, and be happy; towards which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father." Moore 1,133.

tially a Puritan home.[12] The disciplined rule and methodical piety of Susannah may seem to support this opinion. Yet her theology was, in fact, self-consciously Anglican, reflecting both its merits and its contemporary problems. Of course, there is no question about Samuel Wesley. This son of a Dissenting minister had been drawn to the Church of England and proved to be one of its most loyal high-churchmen and fervent Tories.

From his father John inherited a fondness for critical learning especially in relation to the Scriptures and their languages as well as a reverence for the doctrine, liturgy and polity of the established Church. He could not but also gain some poetic sensibility from the manifest writings of this laborious if somewhat pedantic priest.

A Methodist historian has suggested that the most successful thing the generally unsuccessful Samuel ever did was to marry Susannah.[13] Whatever gifts she brought from the most articulate line of Dissent which her father, Dr. Samuel Annesley, had represented with distinction, she proved a major theological influence upon her children. It will be seen that her well-trained ability to create or defend theologically, coupled with a devoted intensity, were the particular endowments which she impressed upon John Wesley.

---

12. Most recently, but with insufficient documentation, John A. Newton, Methodism and the Puritans, (London: William's Trust, 1964), p. 4. C.F. Frank Baker, "Wesley's Puritan Ancestry, op.cit. "Had John Wesley depended solely on parental information and enthusiasm, he would certainly not have developed that sympathy with the Puritans which he reached in later years along with the realization that even his own Puritan ancestry had in part foreshadowed the Methodist movement." p.184.

13. Rupert Davies, Methodism, (Penguin Books, 1963), p.44.

It could be said that some of the differences apparent at Epworth were mediated to the mind of the young Wesley and he was to wrestle with the options bequeathed to him.[14] High-churchmanship and evangelical zeal; critical learning and practical divinity; polity and personal rule; the claims of a parish and a world, these options, although not contradictory, had to be held in some form of creative tension. Some of the critical decisions of Wesley's later ministry can be interpreted as attempts to hold together the scriptural truths embedded in those converging traditions which had nourished his youth.

The present task is to review the positions of Samuel and Susannah Wesley on the major questions of the knowledge of God and the nature of faith and love.

(i) The Knowledge of God

In 1704 Susannah Wesley wrote a letter to Samuel, her fourteen year-old son, then a student in Westminster School.[15] This most interesting document which takes on the proportions of a theological tractate is a good source for the bases of her theological position and, incidentally, it makes clear her acquaintance with the current debate on reason and revelation.[16] She asserts the validity of natural religion in terms which had become

---

14. Susannah had written, "It is an unhappiness almost peculiar to our family, that your father and I seldom think alike." Letter February 23rd, 1725 in Tyerman, 1, 32.

15. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 175-181.

16. In 1712 she had written a treatise on natural theology; cf. John Kirk, The Mother of the Wesleys (Cincinnati, 1867), pp. 186f. See also, Adam Clarke, Memoirs of the Wesley Family (London: Kershaw, 1823) pp.281f.

common-place:

> Nor does natural religion only teach us to believe His existence, but it likewise assures us that He is the Creator and Governor of all things, and that nothing can justly be attributed to Him that implies the least imperfection....All His attributes we may plainly perceive by the same light; as also the first principles of natural religion, which is founded on the knowledge of God and ourselves. [17]

The internal and external worship of God can be derived from natural religion and the whole range of moral virtues presuppose this natural knowledge of God and of his perfections. But then the question is raised as to the need for revelation. Its necessity depends upon two factors. Although natural knowledge could intuit all that has been stated, the truth is that men are ignorant and blinded by their passions.[18] Secondly, natural religion cannot attend to that which is non-temporal. Only revelation can "discover how man's nature became defective" and by what means he "must now escape the justice and appease the anger of the Almighty."[19] The revelation of the New Testament

---

17. Stevenson, op. cit., p.176. Samuel referred to her letter in his own to his son in 1706. One paragraph is noteworthy: "I hope you are tolerably grounded, for one of your age, in the principles of natural religion, and the firm belief of the being of God, as well as of his providence, justice, and goodness, towards which you have had considerable advantages in your reading so much of Tillotson, while you were here, as well as in your mother's most valuable letter to you on that subject." Ibid., p. 96-97.

18. There is a filtered Platonism in some of Susannah's constructions, e.g., "God is the true and proper centre of the mind, towards which it had always regularly moved, had not sin interposed and cast a shade between him and its noblest faculties." Stevenson, op. cit., p.181.

19. Ibid., p. 177. She summarizes, "Thus revelation became very necessary to lead men to the knowledge of God's unity and His other perfections, as well as to instruct men in their duty towards Him." p.178.

shows how "the whole doctrine of redemption is founded on the supposition of Adam's fall. ... But as in Adam all died, so in Christ were all made alive; that is, were brought into a salvable condition."[20] Susannah's understanding of the atonement is informed by a presupposition as to the primacy of divine love:

> But the infinite goodness of God, who delighteth that his mercy should triumph over his justice: laid help upon One that is mighty.... And upon a view of the satisfaction which Christ would make for the sins of the whole world was the penalty of Adam's disobedience suspended, and he admitted to a second trial; and God renewed his covenant with man, not on the former condition of perfect obedience, but on condition of faith in Christ Jesus, and a sincere though imperfect obedience to the laws of God .... By faith in Christ is to be understood an assent to whatever is recorded of him in Holy Scripture.[21]

It followed that Christian obedience meant a life of love. From the Saviour men learn "that to love the eternal ever blessed God with the full power and energy of the soul is the principal duty of a Christian, and the complement of Christian perfection and happiness."[22]

---

20. Ibid., p.179; cf also pp. 185,189. It is interesting to compare this wording with Locke's opening to his The Reasonableness of Christianity,"It is obvious to anyone, who reads the New Testament, that the doctrine of redemption and consequently of the gospel, is founded upon the supposition of Adam's fall." He also proceeded to quote 1 Cor. 15:22. Works, VII, 4, supra pp. 42-43.

21. Adam Clarke, Memoirs, pp. 291-292. This comes from Susannah's treatise on the Apostles' Creed (1709-1710) printed in full in Clarke, pp. 283-313.

22. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 180.

In her letters to John at Oxford Susannah showed that she still held to the primacy of love as an ontological principle.[23] But the scheme and manner of redemption remain a mystery:

> That God, the mighty God...who is Being itself, and comprehends in his most pure nature absolute perfection and blessedness;... that such a Being should in the least degree regard the salvation of sinners, that he Himself, the offended, the injured, should propose terms of reconciliation and admit them into covenant upon any conditions, is truly wonderful and astonishing! As God did not make the world because He needed it, so neither could that be any reason for redeeming it. He loved us because He loved us; and would have mercy because He would have mercy.[24]

She advised her son that the best means of contrition, which itself is a sorrow for sin proceeding from the love of God, is to meditate on the divine love demonstrated in the redemption by God incarnate.[25]

---

23. Letter November 27th, 1735, "God is Being itself! The I AM! And therefore must necessarily be the Supreme Good!" Arminian Magazine, 1,84; Stevenson, op. cit., p. 213.

24. Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 167-168. (Feb. 21st, 1732).

25. "To contemplate God as He is in Himself, we cannot. If we aim at doing it, we feel nature faints under the least perception of His greatness, and we are presently swallowed up and lost in the immensity of His glory: for finite, in the presence of Infinite, vanishes straight into nothing. But when we consider Him under the character of Saviour, we revive; and the greatness of that majesty which before astonished and confounded our weak faculties now enhances the value of his condescension towards us, and melts into tenderness and love." Stevenson, p. 209. (March 30th, 1734).

Although she can speak on the present benefits of the atonement in relation to the sacrament, her formulations seem to depend more upon a sequence which moves from the ontology of natural theology to certain christological affirmations.[26] It is this sequence, so characteristic of the Anglican divines of the preceding century, which informs her understanding of the nature of faith and her position on predestination.

(ii) The Nature of Faith

When John Wesley was preparing for ordination he began a correspondence with his mother on the related subjects of the nature of faith and the doctrine of predestination. He had adopted a definition of faith from the Anglican theologian, Richard Fiddes (1671-1725). Faith was "a species of belief" where belief is defined as "an assent to a proposition upon rational grounds." (L.1,22,24 and note 1.). Echoing the Latitudinarians and Locke, Wesley asserts that "without rational grounds there is therefore no belief, and consequently no faith." (L.1,22). Because the divine testimony is the most reasonable of all evidence, faith must at length be resolved into reason. With a confident syllogism the young student concludes:

> God is true; therefore what he says is true.
> He hath said this; therefore it is true.
> When anyone can bring me more reasonable

---

26. Cf. her notes on Christian Liberty, which assume "the eternal order of the Universe." L, VIII, 269.

> propositions than these, I am ready to assent to them: till then, it will be highly unreasonable to change my opinion. (L. 1,23). [27]

Susannah investigated this piece of logic-chopping and sent back a reply in which she told him that he was mistaken in his notions of faith. "All faith is assent, but all assent is not faith." Beyond an assent to a truth as self-evident and an assent to that which has been rationally proven, there is a third possibility: faith as an assent to something revealed to us either by God or man. Such revelation is the proper object of faith:

> The true measure of faith is the authority of the revealer, the weight of which always holds proportion to our conviction of his ability and integrity. Divine faith is an assent to whatever God has revealed to us, because he has revealed it. And this is that virtue of faith which is one of the two conditions of our salvation by Jesus Christ. [28]

---

27. In a letter, September 1st, 1725, his father showed some concern about this type of rationalism. "I like your thinking and arguing, and yet I must say I am a little afraid of it. He that believes, and yet argues against reason, is half a Papist, or enthusiast. He that would make Revelation bend to his own shallow reason is either half a deist or a heretic. Oh, my dear! steer clear between this Scylla and Charybdis." Stevenson, op. cit., p. 123.

28. Letter dated August 18th, 1725, parts of which appear in John Whitehead, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., (Philadelphia, 1845), 1,242-244 and in Tyerman, op. cit., 1,39f and Arminian Magazine 1,36 (though wrongly dated). This letter is printed intact in Maximin Piette, John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism, trans. Howard (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937), pp.256-258. The above quotations from this latter volume, pp.257-258. In this letter Mrs. Wesley refers John to Pearson's Exposition of the Creed and upon a comparison of her statement with the Bishop's work it is obvious that she was indebted to him for the order and the content of her definition, e.g. "The strength and validity of every testimony must bear proportion with the authority of the Testifier; and the authority of the testifier is founded upon his ability and integrity." "Divine faith is an assent unto something as credible upon the testimony of God." An Exposition of the Creed (Oxford, 1833), I, 7,9. Although John Wesley later believed that Pearson's definition of faith "was abundantly too wide" and that it did not adequately define justifying and sanctifying faith, he continued to regard the work highly and to recommend it as a "library in one volume" and the best source of Christian doctrine beside the New Testament: Letters, III,174,IV,243; cf. also IV,249,378; VI,314; VII,83.

This definition added to her son's perspective and he accepted her criticism, although his reply still shows more concern for logistics than for a conclusion:

> Fiddes' definition of faith I perceived on reflection to trespass the very first law of defining, as not being adequate to the thing defined, which is but a part of the definition. An assent grounded both on testimony and reason takes in science as well as faith, which is on all hands allowed to be distinctive from it. I am, therefore, at length come over entirely to your opinion, that saving faith (including practice) is an assent to what God has revealed because he has revealed it and not because the truth of it may be evinced by reason. (L.1,25).

Here was a slight advance in an arid discussion; one might say it constituted an advance from a rationalism to a notional faith. Without any Christological reference of consequence, it has simply been established that faith is a peculiar assent dependent upon revelation. What is the content of this revelation?

This question receives some response in a letter written by Susannah in 1735. She begins by asserting that God is altogether inaccessible apart from his revelation in Jesus Christ and then defines "saving faith":

> By <u>faith</u> I do not mean, an assent only to the truths of the Gospel concerning Him; but such an assent as influences our practice: as makes us heartily and thankfully accept Him for our God and Saviour. No faith below this can be saving.[29]

But her reason for the priority of revelation is still the fact that men are blinded to their need of a Saviour by their natural pride and self-sufficiency. So it must be stressed that without the atonement God's justice would remain unsatisfied. Here lies, as she had once written to her eldest son, the necessity for

---

29. <u>Arminian Magazine</u>, 1,81 also Stevenson, <u>op. cit.</u>, p.210.

revealed religion; the thought, however, is introduced almost incidentally:

> Would not some mention of the necessity of revealed religion be proper here? since without it, all the wit of man could never have found out, how human nature was corrupted in its fountain: neither had it been possible for us to have discovered any way or means whereby it might be restored to its primitive purity.[30]

Once men are affected "with a sense of redeeming love" they will leave the vanity of the world so that they may win Christ.[31]

She concludes this letter by asserting that Christian morality is based upon "the excellence and perfection of the moral virtues, taught by Christ and his apostles." In comparison, the morality of the heathen is "defective in principle and direction" and tends only to temporal happiness.[32]

---

30. Ibid., 1,82 and Stevenson, p.210.
It is of interest to note that Samuel Wesley was absorbed with this theme of restoration. The last lines of his poem, The Life of Christ, read:
"When the last Fire to Atoms should disperse,
This beauteous Poem of the Universe;
Which heavenly Art far lovelier will restore,
When Death and Time itself shall be no more."
He appended a long note on the history of the doctrine of restoration from the Fathers to some contemporaries including Norris of Bemerton, and shows that he is open to the possibility of the apokatastasis of Acts 3:21.
The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (London: Harper, 1693) pp.344,348f.

31. Arminian Magazine 1,83 and Stevenson, p.210-211.

32. Idem. Susannah effectively cites John Locke's reply to someone who had asked him to draw up a system of morals: "Did the world want a Rule, I confess, there could be no work so necessary, nor so commendable. But the Gospel contains so perfect a body of ethics, that reason may be excused from that enquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer, and easier in revelation, than in herself." (Idem).

This is the extent of Susannah's thinking on the nature and content of faith. It remains to examine her contribution on the doctrine of predestination.

(iii) Predestination.

While preparing for his ordination in 1725 John Wesley also became concerned about an interpretation of Article XVII-Of Predestination and Election. A reading of Thomas à Kempis had raised some issues and for a time his youthful interest centered on the joyless existence which seemed to be implicit in the Imitation.

> I can't think that when God sent us into the world He had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If it be so, the very endeavour after happiness in this life is a sin; as it is acting in direct contradiction to the very design of our creation.... A fair patrimony indeed, which Adam has left his sons, if they are destined to be continually wretched! (L. 1,16).

This simple and preliminary criticism merited Susannah's comment. Although not remembering the passage to which he was referring, she replied in principle and called such an assertion by Thomas, "impious" and "blasphemous."

> That God, by an irresistible decree, hath determined any man to be miserable even in this life. His intentions, as Himself, are holy and just, and good: all the miseries incident to men, here or hereafter, spring from themselves. The case stands thus. This life is a state of Probation wherein eternal Happiness, or Misery, are proposed to our choice, the one

was the Reward of a virtuous, the other, as a Consequence of a victorious Life. 33

God's design for man's time of probation was that he be restored to his original righteousness and happiness.

A more serious discussion on this matter proceeded. The setting is the tentative analysis of faith as an assent to any truth upon rational grounds; it being axiomatic for both Susannah and John that any proposition which is incompatible with divine justice or mercy contradicts reason and therefore must be dismissed.[34]

---

33. Arminian Magazine, 1,33-34, also Stevenson, p.201. Samuel Wesley was more circumspect toward à Kempis, his "friend and old companion." "As for Thomas à Kempis, all the world are apt to strain on one side or the other. And 'tis no wonder, if contemplative men, especially when wrapt in a cowl, and the darkness of the Mystic Divinity, when they observed the bulk of the world so mad for sensual pleasures, should run into the contrary extreme, and attempt to persuade us to have no senses at all, and that God made them to very little purpose." Arminian Magazine 1,30. On the question of the decrees, however, he was unequivocal, "We cannot be satisfied by any of those scriptures which are brought for that purpose, that there is any election of a determinate number as either puts a force on their nature and irresistibly saves them, or absolutely excludes all the rest of mankind from salvation." Cited from the Athenian Oracle, 1,178 in William Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, op. cit., p.45. (The italics are Wesley's).

34. In 1725 this principle would seem to be the factor in the scruples Wesley had about the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed. His sensitivity had some worthy precedent. In spite of Article VIII, Chillingworth, "The damning clauses in St. Athanasius's Creed are most false, and also in a high degree schismatical and presumptuous." Also Jeremy Taylor, "It seems very hard to put uncharitableness into a creed and so to make it become an article of faith." Both cited by Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, 1,40,n.1. Cf. also J.N.D. Kelly, The Athanasian Creed (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p.124. Kelly relates that Daniel Waterland's A Critical History of the Athanasian Creed had been published in 1724 and that this work, while stirring up a debate, vindicated the Church's retention of the Quicunque and its trinitarian doctrine (pp.5f). Samuel Wesley's justification of the damnata was to the effect that the severe words were levelled only against obstinate heretics. Arminian Magazine, 1,31 cf. Stevenson, pp.123f. Wesley's early hesitation in respect to confessional damnata is echoed e.g. S.LV,3, On the Trinity, Works VI, 200.

The following passage written by John in 1725 reveals the presuppositions with which he was approaching the dogmatic task:

> What, then, shall I say of predestination? An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation, does, I suppose, exclude all from that deliverance who are not chosen. And if it was inevitably decreed from eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine Justice or Mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for crimes which he could not but commit? How is man, if necessarily determined to one way of acting, a free agent? To lie under either a physical or a moral necessity is entirely repugnant to human liberty. But that God should be the author of sin and injustice (which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion) is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the divine nature and perfections.(L.1,22-23).

John's confidence begins to limp in what amounts to a naïve solution and he appeals for help.[35] Susannah replied with a precise examination of the issues which Article XVII raised. Her letter, which Wesley, in later years deemed important enough to be included in the Arminian Magazine, proposes an argument which he was to develop and use effectively in his protracted controversy with the Calvinists. After agreeing with his criticism of the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation, that it charged God with being the author of sin, she makes her positive contribution:

---

35. "I used to think that the difficulty of Predestination might be solved by supposing that it was indeed decreed from eternity that a remnant should be elected, but that it was in every man's power to be of that remnant. But the words of our Article will not bear that sense. I see no other ways but to allow that some may be saved who were not always of the number of the elected (L.1,23)."

> I do firmly believe, that God from eternity hath elected some to everlasting life; but then I humbly conceive, that this election is founded in his fore-knowledge; according to that in the eighth of Romans, verse 29,30 (the text is cited). Whom in his eternal prescience, God saw would make a right use of their powers, and accept of offered mercy- He did predestinate- adopt for His children, His peculiar treasure. And that they might be conformed to the Image of His only Son, He called them to Himself by His eternal Word, through the preaching of the Gospel; and internally by His Holy Spirit; which call they obeying, repenting of their sins and believing in the Lord Jesus, He justifies them- absolves them from the guilt of their sins, and acknowledges them as just and righteous persons, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ- and having thus justified, He receives them to glory- to heaven. [36]

She concludes that this interpretation is agreeable to the analogy of faith; "since it does in no wise derogate from the glory of God's free grace, nor impair the liberty of man."[37]

It will be a later task to show that although Wesley's mature doctrine of election improved on this statement, he was nevertheless indebted to the tradition which his mother had so clearly represented. This whole correspondence contained some directions which he was to follow and preserve inviolate.

Summary

From this correspondence, which featured chiefly the theological acumen of Susannah Wesley, some conclusions can

---

36. Arminian Magazine 1,37.

37. Arminian Magazine 1,38.

now be drawn.

The correspondence reveals a general dependence upon theological structures which were explicit in the Anglican pronouncements at the end of the seventeenth century. Although there is some equivocation in Susannah's formulation of the problem of religious knowledge, she did continue to assume and employ certain tenets of natural religion while asserting the necessity for revelation. The concept of the perfections of God is used presuppositionally and apart from revelation. One looks in vain for a Dissenting zeal which insists on the priority of revelation over all rationalist speculation. In this matter it is apparent that she lived "between the times."

On the basis of the claims of natural theology it was possible to speak of the primacy of the goodness or love of God. It is this love which identifies sin and, in the contemplation of which, man might come to faith and continue in obedience. On this basis, therefore, the principles of religious knowledge and virtue could be known.

Faith is an assent. The only significant additive to this definition is that it is an assent which has the character of love. Although faith is possible only through the merits of Christ which have been accepted by the Father, there is little fiduciary sense in the many definitions which are exchanged. Toward the end of the letter of March 30th, 1734 Susannah offers the following advice of Richard Baxter:

> Put your souls, with all your sins and dangers, and all their interests, into the hand of Jesus Christ your Saviour, and trust them wholly with Him by a resolved faith. It is He that hath

> purchased them, and therefore loveth them. It is He that is the owner of them, by right of redemption; and it is now become His own interest, even for the success and honour of His redemption, to save them. [38]

The fact that the reader of this correspondence is hardly prepared for all that Baxter meant points up the inadequacy of Susannah's formulations. With all her stress upon the loving intention of God and upon faith as assent to this intention now realized in Christ, Baxter's sense of recumbency is not evident.

Echoing the traditional postulates of a theology of piety, the Christian's life in the world consists in the glorifying of God and a life of obedience. The definition of faith, however, neglects the reality of sin and thereby assumes justification under sanctification. Although the need for grace is recognized, Susannah's emphasis tended to encourage a human righteousness rather than the acceptance of that "new righteousness" in Christ which is the Christian's sole claim.[39]

Finally the axioms of recent Anglicanism become most

---

38. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 209.

39. We recall the hard saying which Charles Wesley, apparently with John's approval, had engraved on her tombstone and which has served chiefly to horrify the admirers of Susannah. It was to the effect that until 1739 she had lived "a legal night of seventy years." (Stevenson, p. 227). Allowing for the excitement of his own discovery of the meaning of faith, it must be admitted that Charles' saying had a certain point.

apparent in what amounted to a standard criticism of the doctrine of predestination as held by the Calvinists. Her presuppositions, like those of her son at this stage, were ontological and not Christological. Faith, as reasonable assent, had made a prior decision as to the perfections of God and among them, the primacy of love.[40] In all she had preserved the message of the love of God for fallen man and the divine intention to offer to all men the possibility of redemption conceived as a restoration to his initial perfection. The pattern of the design was clear; the way of holiness was affirmed; the role of faith, however, in this whole process toward perfection was hardly developed.

---

40. In his chapter on Wesley's ancestors and family home, Martin Schmidt has placed considerable emphasis on Susannah's acquaintance with Romanic mysticism and the mystical piety of Henry Scougal. The latter will be discussed presently. It would seem that Schmidt has made too much of the influence of Scupoli-Castaniza on the basis of a single source, cf. Clarke, Memoirs, p. 337, 339 and Proc. Wesley Historical Society XVIII (1931-32), 169-172. However, his general conclusion to this chapter supports the findings of this section: "Through this rich polyphony one leading theme resounds like a cantus firmus: it is that of the love of God which empowers man towards perfection." John Wesley, A Theological Biography, p. 63.

C. LITERARY SOURCES

In continuing to trace the dominant influences on Wesley's theological development we turn now to some of the literature which he was reading and upon which he commented during his early period. In doing so, one is confronted by an impressive list. The Oxford student and don was extremely well-read and it is possible here only to analyze a small number of sources which, for various reasons, proved to be strategic. From these sources certain recurring themes which have to do with the area of this study will be extrapolated and discussed.

1. THE CHURCH FATHERS

In the first part of this work it was shown how the appeal to the Fathers of the primitive Church was so pervasive in seventeenth-century Anglicanism that it can properly be thought of as a methodological principle. It was generally held that the Scripture was best understood and interpreted by those who belonged to the centuries "when the Church was at its best."[41]

The theologians of the Anglican tradition-Cranmer, Hooker, Pearson, Taylor, Hammond, Beveridge, Bull, Stillingfleet- to name but a few, were all thorough patristic scholars. In reading their work, John Wesley also shared their presuppositions

---

41. The phrase is Laud's, cited McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, p. 316. In chapters IX and X of this work there is an analysis of the appeal to antiquity as an element in theological method.

as to the importance of the faith and piety of the early tradition.[42] He also read many of the Fathers for himself as well as such synoptic works as Cave's Primitive Christianity, Whiston's Primitive Christianity Revived, Fleury's The Manners of the Ancient Christians and Nelson's A Companion for the Festivals and Feasts of the Church of England.[43]

---

42. Cf. Wesley's preface to the Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers in A Christian Library, 30 vols. (London: 1819-1827), 1,iii-iv.
(It has been decided to use this edition of this work rather than the original edition of 50 volumes (1749-1755) because of its corrections and additions. It is also, of course, more accessible). This work hereinafter cited "C.L." in the footnotes.

43. (a) On Cave's work (1672), see V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, p.314 also J.1,262-268 (Diary). Wesley abridged this work for A Christian Library, vol.XIX; on this, J.111,392,499.

(b) Whiston's work in 5 volumes (1711-1712) contained the Epistles of Ignatius,The Apostolical Constitutions and Canons, Dissertations and Recognitions of Clement. A comparison of Whiston's translation of the Ignatian Epistles with Wesley's abridgement in the first volume of A Christian Library reveals his use of Whiston. He also followed the Eusebian ordering of the Epistles as adopted by Whiston.

(c) On Fleury, J.1,198f,n.2. Wesley published an abridgement of this work in 1749. It begins with the following presupposition with which Wesley must surely have agreed: "As the Christian religion is not an invention of men, but the work of God, it received its full perfection at the beginning of it. For who can imagine, the Apostles were ignorant of any truth necessary or useful to salvation? Or that anything has been since found out touching the conduct of life, more wise and excellent than what Jesus Christ taught them. It is among the first Christians, therefore, that we must look for a pattern of the most perfect life, and by consequence of the most happy which can be upon earth." The Manners of the Ancient Christians, Second Edition (Bristol, 1749), p.2.

(d) Robert Nelson was a friend of the Wesley family. Cf. Samuel Wesley's correspondence with him, Clarke, Memoirs, pp. 376ff. Also Wesley, L.VII, 324.

Much of this reading reinforced Wesley's high-church principles. At a crucial stage, for example, Cyprian helped him articulate his understanding of the nature of the Church, its ministry and institutions over against those quietists and mystics who denied the necessity of order and the means of grace (J.1,416 and n n.3).[44] It is also known that he took a lively interest in some of the critical problems, particularly in the current debate on the dating and authority of the Apostolical Constitutions and Ecclesiastical Canons.[45] With John Clayton and his own brother,

---

44. For Wesley's later defence of Cyprian and a number of the Fathers, his letter to Conyers Middleton, January 4th, 1749 (L.11,312-388). On Cyprian pp. 357-359.

45. Cave had rejected the theory of the apostolic authorship of the Constitutions, see Simon, op.cit.,p.102, but Whiston had revived this dating. Beveridge at first attributed them to Clement of Alexandria but later accepted the third century as the more probable date. Cf. The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951),p.388. Beveridge's Latin version, Codex Canonum Ecclesiae Primitivae, vindicatus ac illustratus, (1678) seems to have been the edition prescribed for missionaries by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and John Wesley studied this while in Georgia (J.1,267-278,especially p.277,n.1). He later confessed that for a time he had been led to make antiquity a coordinate with Scripture (J.1,419-420).
Wesley actually wrote notes on the Constitutions and Canons which were printed by R.Denny Urlin, John Wesley's Place in Church History (London: Rivington,1870), pp.68-76 and in his The Churchman's Life of Wesley, (London: S.P.C.K., New Edn. no date), pp.66f and Appendix XI. Urlin suggested that these notes were written most probably between 1739 and 1742. John C.Bowmer has offered a plausible argument for an earlier date, "about 1736 or even in his Oxford days." The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (London: Dacre, 1951), Appendix IV. See also, Albert Outler, John Wesley, pp.12-13, note 42. A technical matter should perhaps be cleared up. Urlin, followed by Bowmer, thought Wesley to be in error in numbering the Canon forbidding clergy to marry as the 27th, instead of the 26th. The solution lies, of course, in the variations in number due to a joining or dividing of several Canons in the Greek text.Cf. Ante-Nicene Fathers, VII,500ff. notes. Wesley in following Whiston rather than Beveridge was correct. Cf. Whiston, Primitive Christianity Revived, vol.2 (The Canons appear toward the end of this volume, no pagination). Cf. also the Ante-Nicene Fathers, VII,501, Canon 26, which has also utilized Whiston's translation. The Beveridge edition is in Theological Works, Parker Edn. (1848), vol.XI.

Charles, he studied these documents under the tutelage of the Non-Juror, Dr. Thomas Deacon who, believing them to be of apostolic origin, had modeled his Prayer Book on the forms and practices which they contained.[46]

John Wesley's first publication in 1733 was a direct result of these studies. In compiling A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day of the Week he had been assisted by John Clayton and this work reflects their mutual interest in the Fathers.[47] The preface to the early editions began with these words:

> The following Collection of Prayers is designed only for those who, by the mercy of God have, first leisure and resolution to set apart at least half an hour twice a day, for their private addresses to Him; and, secondly, a sincere reverence for, if not some acquaintance with, the Ancient Christian Church. He who has not the former qualifications, will take offence at the length; he who has not the latter, at the matter of them.[48]

---

46. Simon, op.cit., pp.102-103, also A.B.Lawson, John Wesley and the Christian Ministry (London: S.P.C.K., 1963), pp.8f.

47. Proc. W.H.S., vol. 3, 202-204, and vol. 13,24f.

48. Third Edition (London: Hutton, 1738). This opening paragraph was elided in later editions. It does not appear in the so-called Fifth Bristol Edition (1755) and therefore Richard Green's note to the effect that in this latter edition the pamphlet was restored to its original character is incorrect; Bibliography, No.1,p.9. In the Jackson edition of the Works the preface is taken from the Sixth Edition of 1775 (Works XIV, 270-272). The Collection of Prayers is in Works XI, 203-237. Referring to his first publication, Wesley wrote in 1765, "In the same year (1733) I printed, (the first time I ventured to print anything), for the use of my pupils, "A Collection of Forms of Prayer;" and in this I spoke explicitly of giving "the whole heart and the whole life to God." This was then, as it is now, my idea of Perfection, though I should have started at this word." (Journal V, 117).
In 1738 A Collection with complete preface was also published by George Whitefield and with his recommendation annexed, The Christian's Companion: or Sermons on Several Subjects (London, 1738).

Wesley continued to recommend and defend the Fathers throughout his ministry (L.11,387, W.X,484), and in this he simply reflected the way of the Anglican tradition. Any attempt to describe and evaluate his studies at this point would require a separate work. The aim here is to consider how Wesley's understanding of the design of the Christian life was deepened by this reading. For this purpose special attention will be paid to Clement of Alexandria and "Macarius" the Egyptian.

Clement of Alexandria

During the Oxford period Wesley "much admired the character of a perfect Christian drawn by Clemens Alexandrinus." Later he took this (L.V,43;J.V,197) description as a model for his own portrayal of the Character of a Methodist.[49]

For Clement, the ordo salutis is the way of perfection. It has faith (pistis) for its beginning and as transitional to knowledge (gnosis), and love (agape) for its end (telos).[50] Christ is

---

49. The Character of a Methodist is in the Works VIII,339-347. He later criticized the Stoicism in Clement's account (L.VI,129).

50. Stromata VII,X. The Ante Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956) 11.538. Anders Nygren shows how this formulation is adopted from Ignatius, Agape and Eros, trans.Philip Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster 1953), pp.362f, 261.
Cf. Wesley's rendering of the Ignatian sentences following Whiston: To the Ephesians 14: "Nothing of this is hid from you, if ye have perfect faith in Jesus Christ, and love, which are the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, love the end: and both being joined in one, are of God. All other things pertaining to perfect holiness follow. For no man that hath faith sinneth; and none that hath love hateth any man." Christian Library 1,36. To the Smyrnaeans: 3 (ad Smyrn.vi), "Let no man's place or state in the world puff him up: that which is worth all is faith and love, to which nothing is to be preferred. But consider those who are of a different opinion from us, as to what concerns the grace of Jesus Christ which is come unto us, how contrary they are to the design of God. Ibid. p. 54 Cf. also, Polycarp to the Phillipians 3:...by which you may be identified in the faith that is given you, which is the mother of us all: which is followed by hope and led by love both of God, and Christ, and our neighbour. For if a man be in these, he hath fulfilled the law of righteousness: for he who hath love is far from all sin. Ibid. p. 27.

"both the foundation and superstructure, by whom are both the beginning and the ends."[51] So the whole content of the Christian life is discovered,

> whenever one hangs on the Lord by faith, by knowledge, by love, and ascends along with Him to where the God and guard of our faith and love is. [52]

Through "unbroken love" man, united by grace with God, rises to that perfection which is permitted to human nature.[53] Clement acknowledged that this perfection is not complete because, in contrast to the teaching of the Stoics, virtue in man and in God is not the same. It is impossible for anyone to become perfect as God is.[54] The future possibility, however, is already anticipated in the presentness of the knowledge and love of God.

> He who by love is already in the midst of that in which he is destined to be, and has anticipated hope by knowledge, does not desire anything, having, as far as possible, the very thing desired. [55]

So Clement conceived of salvation as a process in faith and knowledge to the reward of perfect love, the earnest of which

---

51. Strom. VII.X (A.N.F. 11.538).

52. Ibid. (A.N.F., p.539).

53. Strom. VI.XII. (A.N.F., p.504).

54. Strom. VII.XIV. (A.N.F., p. 549).

55. Strom. VI.IX. (A.N.F., p.497).
Eric F. Osborn cites this passage with some interesting parallels from the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith. The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria (Cambridge,1957), pp. 165,167. The Alexandrians were a prominent influence upon this group of Anglican theologians, and, as we shall see, Wesley knew and published several of their works.

was already being realized in the midst of life. The true Gnostic is "the really perfect man and friend of God, and is placed in the rank of son."[56]

> For it is said, "To him that hath shall be given;" to faith, knowledge; and to knowledge, love; and to love, the inheritance. [57]

It will be seen that Clement with his strong predilection for agape and with his understanding of the Christian's life as a process beginning with faith and ending in this love, reinforced the essential elements in Wesley's developing doctrine of perfect love.

Macarius

The other Church Father to be considered is "Macarius the Egyptian" whose Homilies Wesley read [illegible] while in Georgia (J.1,254).[58]

---

56. Strom. VII.11 (A.N.F., p.526); VII.XI (A.N.F., p.542).

57. Strom. VII.X (A.N.F., p. 539).

58. Wesley's extracts of the Macarian Homilies are included in the first volume of the Christian Library, immediately following the section on the Apostolic Fathers. In later book-lists compiled by Wesley, Macarius and Ephraem Syrus receive special emphasis. Cf. L.11,387 and the supplement to his third edition of John Norris's Reflections Upon the Conduct of Human Life (London, 1755) p.36. Here the list under the heading, "Greek Prose," includes Plato's Dialogues, Ignatius, Ephraim Syrus, Macarius and Chrysostom. In his sermon, The Scripture Way of Salvation (Works, VI.45-46) the seventeenth Homily is cited. Cf. Christian Library 1,97.
Wesley turned to Ephraem Syrus repeatedly, especially in preparation for preaching (J.1,276,279,283-285,294-295, 297).

Dr. Albert Outler has made a contribution to Wesley studies by pointing up Wesley's indebtedness to the Eastern Fathers. Outler accepts the conclusions of Werner Jaeger to the effect that the so-called Macarian Homilies were composed, not by a fourth-century Egyptian "desert-father," but by a fifth-century Syrian monk "whose concept of Christian spirituality was derived almost exclusively from Gregory of Nyssa."[59] Of course, Wesley was not to know of this pseudonimity but Outler's conclusion is important:

> What matters most in connection with Wesley is that in the writings of what he thought was "Macarius the Egyptian," he was actually in touch with Gregory of Nyssa, the greatest of all the Eastern Christian teachers of the quest for perfection. [60]

---

59. John Wesley (New York: Oxford, 1964), pp.9f and note 25. Cf. Werner Jaeger, Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius (Leiden: Brill, 1954), pp.208-230. Jaeger also shows connections between Ephraem Syrus and Gregory, pp.161f, 226f.

60. Idem. There are other interesting details in Wesley's relation to this literature. In 1721 an edition of the Homilies was published in England with a lengthy title beginning with these words, "Primitive Morality, Or, The Spiritual Homilies of St.Macarius the Egyptian, Full of very profitable instructions concerning that Perfection, which is expected from Christians, and which it is their duty to endeavour after..... By a Presbyter of the Church of England." For the full title see Macarii Anecdota, Seven Unpublished Homilies of Macarius, ed. G.L.Marriott, Harvard Theol. Studies V,1918,p.6. Cf. also Proc. Wesley Historical Society VIII,p.7f which adds publishing details. Marriott credits the 1721 edition to Thomas Haywood and this verdict is now generally supported. The most recent edition of the Homilies, Die 50 Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios, ed. H.Dörries, E.Klosterman, M.Kroeger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964) also confirms this conclusion as to the editor. The German edition also notes Wesley's edition in A Christian Library but does not correctly record the Homilies which Wesley in fact included (p.xlix). There is no doubt that Wesley employed Haywood's text for his source. Cf.e.g. his introduction (C.L.1,69-71) with Haywood (pp. 9-13,32-33). See also, Proc. W.H.S. Vol. VIII (1911-1912) pp. 6f.

Werner Jaeger, in his recent edition of the works of Gregory, describes his philosophy of monastic asceticism in the following summary:

> The foundation of that philosophy was the Christian faith as it was laid down in the Nicene Creed and interpreted by the Cappadocian school of theology. But Gregory presented the Christian religion as culminating in the contemplation of the divine Being and its eternal Will. The sanctification of man was interpreted as a process of purification of the soul and its gradual ascent and return to divine Being. [61]

When, in 1721, Thomas Haywood decided upon the quaint subtitle for his English edition of the Homilies, "Full of very profitable instructions concerning Perfection," he was, of course, pointing to the very core of this ascetic Eastern theology.[62] The Christian way is a progression toward perfect love. But it is a progression enabled solely by grace. Thomas Haywood said of Macarius,

> There is no man, certainly, enlarges upon the corruption and depravity of human nature than our author. Nor need any one insist more upon the necessity of divine grace and assistance on all occasions. [63]

Macarius's doctrine of the prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit leads to the Christological center of his soteriology. If his teaching on union with God constitutes a mysticism, then it is, as Flew

---

61. Op. cit., p.23. Cf. also George Boas, Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages, (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1948), pp.28-31.

62. Cf. Jaeger, op. cit., p. 28-33. Cf. also R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (Oxford, 1934), pp. 182-188.

63. Primitive Morality, p. 45.

has stated, a "Christ mysticism," throughout.[64] For there is an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man which denies strongly any idea of mystical absorption:

> Hear men. This is God: She (the Church) is not God. This is the Lord: She the servant. This is the Creator: She a creature. This is the Workman: She the workmanship. There is nothing common to both natures.[65]

Christ, in his condescension, comes to save man and "to restore to him the original formation of Adam in his purity."[66] The perfect man is henceforth one who is "bound and captivated by grace."[67]

Alexander Knox, a correspondent of the elderly Wesley and a theologian in his own right, was concerned to show his friend's indebtedness to the Fathers. Echoing an Anglican ideal which Cranmer had once established in the Homilies, Knox claimed that Wesley's theology could be viewed as a synthesis of the "vital principles" of Augustine and Chrysostom.[68]

---

64. Op. cit., p.186. Cf. J.N.D. Kelly on Clement, "It is clear that Clement's soteriology issues in a Christ-mysticism in which the Lord's passion and death have little or no redemptive part to play." Early Christian Doctrines (London: Black, 1958), p.184.

65. Hom. XLIX, Haywood p. 476, Wesley, C.L.1,130.

66. Hom. XXVI, Haywood p. 320, Wesley, p. 110.

67. Hom. XXVI, Haywood p. 331, Wesley, p. 111. This did not mean that the believer could not fall from grace cf. Hom. XVII, Haywood, pp. 276f, Wesley, p. 97.

68. Cranmer, Miscellaneous Writings, op. cit., 11,137,141-143.

> The great truths of St. Augustine, respecting human depravity and efficient grace, are experimentally recognized, followed by a progress, in which the sublime views of St. Chrysostom appear substantially. [69]

This suggestion will need to be examined in terms of Wesley's mature thought and it is obviously too early to speak here of any synthesis. Rather it is important to stress that Clement and Macarius, and for that matter, Chrysostom, lived on a very different theological plane to that of Augustine and his followers in the Reformation period. Einar Moland in his work on Clement and Origen has written:

> Protestantism and Alexandrian theology are two worlds where every word and every idea has a different color. [70]

The Eastern theology was one of objectivity and harmony. Cosmology and soteriology, the law and the gospel, moral effort and divine grace were held together in an exalted synthesis which was subject only to the realization of perfection in union with God. These elements in Clement, and expressed with more biblical realism in Macarius, comprised the Eastern contribution to the profound debate on grace and freedom which was soon to shake Western Christendom. Werner Jaeger says of Gregory and his tradition:

---

69. Remains of Alexander Knox (London: 1844) 111,153,170,482f.

70. The Conception of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology (Oslo, 1938), p.172. Molland goes on to remark, "It is characteristic that those who in modern times have loved Clement and Origen have been, with some significant exceptions, not Roman Catholics, nor Lutherans, nor Calvinists, but Anglicans." pp. 172-173. I am indebted to this author for some of the ideas expressed in the following paragraph.

> From the point of view of the Pelagian controversy, which his treatise (De Instituto Christiano) foreshadows, Gregory must be defined as a Semipelagian. He makes us see how deeply rooted this position was in the Hellenic tradition of the Eastern Church. Here are conceptions of human nature, grace and freedom which we shall meet again, not in St. Augustine or in Luther, but in the humanism of Erasmus. [71]

In Wesley's early period it can be shown that the Augustinian sense of the impotence of man apart from grace, is not declared as deliberately as the Eastern emphasis upon the possibility of process under grace toward perfection. The format which he used in the Collection of Prayers, to which reference has been made, is a valuable index to the importance of this emphasis. In the preface he wrote:

> Whoever follows the direction of our excellent Church, in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, by keeping close to that sense of them which the Catholic Fathers and ancient Bishops have delivered to succeeding generations, will easily see that the whole system of Christian duty is reducible to these five heads (W. XIV, 270-271).

He proceeds to describe renunciation, devotion to God, self-denial and mortification; then he concludes:

> Fifthly: Christ liveth in me. This is the fulfilling of the law, the last stage of Christian holiness: This maketh the man of God perfect. He that being dead to the world is alive to God; the desire of whose soul is unto his name; who has given Him his whole heart; who delights in Him, and in nothing else but what tends to Him; who, for his sake, burns with love for all mankind; who neither thinks, speaks, nor acts, but to fulfill his will,- is on the last round of the ladder to heaven: Grace hath had its full work upon his soul: The next step is into glory (W. XIV, 272).

---

71. Two Rediscovered Works, op. cit., p. 12.

The year was 1733. That paragraph, more than any other in his early writing, shows his indebtedness to the witness of the primitive Church and particularly to its Eastern Fathers.

2. THOMAS à KEMPIS

The names of Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor and William Law appear together in several passages where Wesley reflects upon his early development (J.1,466-467; W.XI,366-367; L.IV,298-299; S.132,1,1 - W.VII,421). This triumvirate proved to be a cumulative and persuasive source of influence especially in relation to his understanding of the nature of perfection.

Mention has already been made of Wesley's reading of the Imitatio Christi in 1725 and of his criticisms in the correspondence course with his mother.[72] He understood à Kempis to be saying that God had irreversibly decreed that the believer should remain miserable in this world. There were two problems about this. There was the general issue of predestination and the more specific problem of the inevitability of misery. The whole trend of the monk's writing seemed to contradict the

---

72. He had read Dean George Stanhope's translation (1698; 10th edition, 1721), cf. V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley p.306. In A Plain Account of Christian Perfection Wesley records the year as 1725 (W.XI,366), but this was a mistake, cf. Green, p.277, also Cannon, op. cit., p.56, note 34. Green states that Wesley probably read à Kempis before reading Jeremy Taylor, but Wesley's remark to the effect that Taylor's teaching was confirmed soon after by his reading of The Christian's Pattern presents difficulties for this conclusion (L.IV,298-299).

biblical injunction "to rejoice and be glad in the Lord." (Ps.68:4) (L.1,16).[73] It is not necessary to stay to enquire whether this reaction represented a zeal for a scriptural doctrine of a good creation or a youthful recoil from the thought of a pleasure-less existence. His positive response was to prove far more important.

As his third publishing venture Wesley issued his own translation of the Imitatio under the title, The Christian's Pattern (1735).[74] The first four sections of the introduction to this work were taken from sources which he acknowledges (W.XIV, 199-209). They have to do with biographical information, the scope of the work, its characteristic temper and suggestions for reading. In the fifth section Wesley discussed his own translation and then wrote a conclusion which included accents which would persist throughout his theological writings:

---

73. Cf. "There are others, that being illuminated in their understandings, and purged in their affection, continually pant after things eternal; hear of earthly things with reluctance, and unwillingly serve the necessities of nature: these perceive what the spirit of truth speaketh in them.
Because it teacheth them to despise earthly, and love heavenly things; to neglect the world, and all the day and night to desire heaven." The Christian's Pattern Book III.IV, p.115. Also III,XX, "Of the acknowledging of our own infirmities, and of the miseries of life." (For details of edition used, see following note).

74. In 1735 Wesley in fact published two different editions of the complete treatise. The one cited here is the earlier edition of the two (London: Rivington, 1735, pp.xxxix, 319,8vo.). Cf. Richard Green's Bibliography No. 3,p.10. The preface to this edition is in the Works XIV, 199-210.

> Expect no softening here; no mincing or paliating of evangelical truths. Here is no countenance cruelly given to half Christians; no false hopes to those of a double heart, to the trimmers between God and the world, who love to term religion the main end of their lives, who say they do make it their chief business, and are willing to allow God the larger part of their affections. Nay, but He hath told thee, O man, as by his Son, so by this faithful follower, that it will nothing avail thee to be almost, unless thou goest on to be altogether a Christian; that He abhorreth faint hearts and feeble hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways; that thou must serve Him, if at all, with all they strength; that this is the whole of man! that thou hast one, only one, end to regard on earth; that thou hast, one, only one, business to pursue; that, since one thing is needful, on that alone thou art to fix thy single eye; namely to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (W. XIV, 210).

The inspiration which he had gained in 1725 when he began to see "that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions," (J.1,466) had remained with him. He still affirmed the decision he had made then "to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness." (J.1.467).

As Wesley's borrowed sections to his introduction to The Christian's Pattern make clear, he had realized that this work was concerned with that perfection to which every Christian is "bound to aspire." Perfection, as "perfect love" is the culmination of the several stages of humility, renunciation, resignation and a union with the divine will. It is a participation in

the divine nature which is, primarily, grace or love (W.XIV,203).[75] For this highest degree,

> it is necessary, not only, that the soul be fully purged from all wilful, habitual sin; but likewise that it be enlightened by the knowledge and practice of all virtue. (W. XIV, 204).

Although this "simplicity of intention" and "purity of affection" (W.XI,367) in à Kempis assume the life of the monastic community, there is much in his writing which personalizes or individualizes the religious life. He could write, "The inward Christian preferreth the care of himself before all other cases."[76] In the writings of other mystics this prepossession could lead to a denial of the communio sanctorum and the means of grace. Of course, the young high-churchman at Oxford would not have yielded to that conclusion, yet this tendency to individualism did support

---

75. Cf. Book 111, LV,247, "O Lord, how exceeding needful is thy grace,for me to begin any good work, to go forward, and to accomplish it; For without it I can do nothing; but in thee I can do all things, when thy grace doth strengthen me .....
For gifts of nature are common to good and bad; but the peculiar gift of the elect is grace or charity; and they that bear this mark, are esteemed worthy of everlasting life.....
Neither faith, nor hope, nor other virtues are acceptable unto thee without love and grace."
Cf. also Book 111,V, "Of the wonderful effects of divine love."

76. Book 11,V p. 78. Cf. Book 111,XXX1, "Of the contempt of all creatures, in order to find out the Creator." Also 11,1,p.70, "He, that can live inwardly and make reckoning of outward things, neither requireth places, nor attendeth times, for the exercise of his devotion."

at least one of his important decisions.[77]

In the Imitatio the instrument of perfection is the grace of God and those means which he has provided: prayer, self-examination, the scriptures and holy communion (W. XIV, 204). The way to perfection is the imitation of Christ who is "the most perfect pattern of all holiness." (W. XIV, 206). Although the necessity of faith as resignation is assumed throughout, any sense of justification is absorbed in the concentration upon those directions and abstentions necessary for sanctification. In the vita solitaria of Thomas it is difficult to distinguish faith in the cross of Christ from a belief that in bearing one's own cross one would achieve salvation.[78]

In reading this classic of devotion two things became clear to the young Wesley. Perfection was the unmistakable telos of the Christian life. Christ was the Christian's pattern. That was indeed to affirm much, but, as Wesley was to discover, it was to claim too little.

---

77. Reference is being made to Wesley's rejection of the charge at Epworth at the end of 1734. In his letter to his father he wrote: "That course of life tends most to the glory of God whereby we can most promote holiness in ourselves and others..... By holiness I mean... the inward temper, a renewal of the soul in the image of God." The priority, however, is to "promote holiness in ourselves." (L.1,167-168). This decision in regard to Epworth will receive further attention in the next chapter.
It should be noted also that the theme of the necessity for suffering, so clear in à Kempis, had become important for Wesley. (L.1,175-178 and 225).

78. Cf. e.g. the following sequence, "There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross.
Take up therefore thy Cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting." Book 11,XII, p.99.

3. JEREMY TAYLOR

If the Catholic monk inspired Wesley with his singular devotion to the way of perfection, Bishop Jeremy Taylor presented the unum necessarium in the more immediate terms of Caroline moral theology. In that age of theological giants he was among the most scholarly and erudite. A convincing expositor, he illumined the faith and piety of the Anglican tradition with his learning and practicality.[79]

In the preceding chapter the numerous references to Taylor showed that he conceived the mission of Anglicanism to be the restoration of the faith and character of the primitive Church. In his churchmanship he was a Laudian, having been chaplain to that resolute archbishop as well as to Charles I.[80] Convinced of the order and discipline of his own tradition he nevertheless opposed dogmatism. He subscribed to the distinction between doctrinal "fundamentals" and "accessories" and showed a consid-

---

79. On Jeremy Taylor: C.J.Stranks, The Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), Thomas Wood, English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), H.R.McAdoo, The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology (London: Longmans, 1949) and The Spirit of Anglicanism, op. cit., pp. 49-80, H. Trevor Hughes, "Jeremy Taylor and John Wesley," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 174 (1949), 296-304, and also The Piety of Jeremy Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1960).

80. "The Church of England had reason to separate from the confession and practices of Rome in many particulars, and yet if her children separate from her they may be unreasonable and impious." Works (Heber-Eden Ed.), IV, 598.

ered liberality in regard to the latter.[81] He kept to the *via media* both in methodology and in content and wrote against the diverse rigidities apparent in both Roman and protestant confessionalism. Some of the weaknesses of Taylor's theology are to be seen from this perspective. His controversial teaching on original sin was an evidence of his desire to subject Augustinian categories to further analysis and to question the determinism which they had imposed on recent theological thinking.[82] This liberality would, in lesser hands, become comfortably latitudinarian but the history of the Church has often admitted the necessary risk taken when forms of dogmatic certainty are challenged and overthrown.

John Wesley was introduced to Taylor's *Rules and Exercises*

---

81. Within his section on "The Love of God" Taylor wrote of zeal: "Remember, that zeal, being an excrescence of Divine love, must, in no sense, contradict any action of love. Love to God includes love to our neighbour; and therefore, no pretence of zeal for God's glory must make us uncharitable to our brother; for that is just so pleasing to God, as hatred is an act of love." *Holy Living*, IV, 111, in *Works*, 111,162. This connection between love and zeal was also important for Wesley, cf. Sermon XCII, "On Zeal," *Works* VII, 57-67.

82. Almost ironically this material on original sin appeared in his *Unum Necessarium*, *Works* VII, which was concerned, with "the doctrine and practice of repentance." The practical aim of the work was obscured in the debate between "liberals" and confessionalists on the interpretation of the ninth Article. Cf. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism*, pp.76-80, and Stranks, *Life and Writings* chap. VII. (It perhaps should be noted that there has been some confusion between Jeremy Taylor's position and that of Dr. John Taylor of Norwich against whom Wesley published his long treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience*, *Works*, IX).

of Holy Living and Holy Dying in 1725.[83] He found some of the bishop's casuistry to be impracticable and, in letters to his mother, he referred particularly to sections on humility and repentance. On humility, the most troublesome sentence read:

> We must be sure in some sense or other to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come. (L.1,19).[84]

Humility was unquestionably necessary to salvation, but if rules like this were essential, who can be humble, who can be saved? (L.1,20). Susannah attempted to establish a transcendent reference. Humility must first be defined as a "habitual disposition wrought in us by a true knowledge of God, his supreme glory and his immense perfection." Only when that is clear can one speak of its accidental effects.[85]

John was still placing his emphasis on the human setting when he replied with a rational argument to disprove Taylor's rule (L.1,21-22). Again his mother responded, this time with terseness, informing him that he had ignored her point and her priority. Humility is that diminution before the knowledge of the perfection of God. She found her son's preoccupation with comparative humility unnecessary, pride-ful and therefore, odious.[86]

---

83. The fact that Wesley adopted diary writing in that year was due to Taylor's inspiration, J.1,83,85. He was also indebted to Taylor for rules he formulated for himself at that time. J.1,47-51. Cf. also H. Trevor Hughes, L.Q.H.R. 174,pp.303f.

84. Taylor, Works, 111, 72.

85. Moore, Life, 1,127. (Letter dated July 21st, 1725).

86. Ibid., 130-132. (August 18th, 1725).

This correspondence contains elements of biographical interest but little that is theologically noteworthy. Susannah had tried to raise the level of the discussion from a picayune interest to a doctrinal principle but in this case they simply spoke past each other.

More important was the matter of repentance because it raised, in a preliminary way, the issue of assurance. Taylor had written:

> A true penitent must all the days of his life pray for pardon and never think the work complete until he dies. Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, therefore still be sorrowful for ever having sinned (L.1,19).[87]

Wesley felt that this contradicted Taylor's words on the benefits of Holy Communion in which,

> all the members are united to one another and to Christ the head: the Holy Ghost confers on us the graces we pray for, and our souls receive into them the seeds of an immortal nature (L.1.20).[88]

The Laudian High-churchman was not being consistently high enough for the young Oxonian:

> I imagined that when I communicated worthily, i.e. with faith, humility, and thankfulness, my preceding sins were <u>ipso facto</u> forgiven me. (Ib.).

Although Susannah agreed with Taylor that repentance was a state and not a transient act she also could not understand his assertion that one cannot be certain of forgiveness. Absolute certainty must await the end, but "a reasonable persuasion" of present forgiveness can be enjoyed in this life.[89] Wesley's

---

87. <u>Works</u>, 111, 210-211.

88. <u>Ibid</u>. 220. Wesley was here summarizing Taylor.

89. Tyerman, <u>Life</u>, 1,38 (July 21st, 1725).

own summary of the issue is his first attempt to state a scriptural doctrine of assurance:

> That we can never be so certain of the pardon of our sins as to be assured they will never rise up against us, I firmly believe. We know that they will infallibly do so if ever we apostatize, and I am not satisfied what evidence there can be of our final perseverance till we have finished our course. But I am persuaded we may know if we are <u>now</u> in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised in the Holy Scriptures to our sincere endeavours, and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity (L.1,22).

Although the ground of Wesley's assurance would change, the realisation of the promise of the Gospel as an "eternal now" was a truth which he would develop and hold to the end of his days.

These criticisms of certain rules in no way detracted from Wesley's indebtedness to Taylor. If à Kempis had described the way of perfection, Taylor had shown him that "purity of intention" was the basis of holy living.

> Instantly I resolved to dedicate <u>all my life</u> to God, <u>all</u> my thoughts and words and actions, being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that <u>every</u> part of my life (not <u>some</u> only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or to myself; that is, in effect, to the devil. (W. XI, 366).

There are two other references to Taylor which are to be found in a letter to his mother dated February 28th, 1730 (L.1, 46-48). First there was a criticism of Taylor's tendency to describe hope as a species of faith. Wesley showed how St. Paul

had clearly distinguished them (1 Cor. 13:13).[90] But there was a further reason for his criticism. He had come to believe that faith was distinguished from any other form of assent or knowledge because of the peculiar character of its evidence as revelation. Hope depended upon an evidence which was less simple:

> It seems to have one of its feet fixed on the Word of God, the other on our opinion of our own sincerity, and so to be a persuasion that we shall enjoy the good things of God, grounded on His promises made to sincere Christians, and on an opinion that we are sincere Christians ourselves (L.1, 47).

---

90. The passage in Taylor reads: "Those I call the internal actions of religion, in which the soul only is employed, and ministers to God in the special actions of faith, hope, and charity. Faith believes the revelations of God, hope expects his promises, and charity loves His excellencies and mercies. Faith gives our understanding to God, hope gives up all the passions and affections to heaven and heavenly things, and charity gives the will to the service of God. Faith is opposed to infidelity, hope to despair, charity to enmity and hostility: and these three sanctify the whole man, and make our duty to God and obedience to His commandments to be chosen, reasonable, and delightful, and therefore, to be entire, persevering, and universal." III,145. The mature Wesley continued to assert that Taylor's thought at this point was inadequate, A Christian Library IX, 195 note.
In describing "The Acts and Offices of Faith" Taylor also dwells on the correlation of faith with love and hope, as a summary in his words will show: To have faith is to believe everything which God has revealed to us. Faith is the parent of charity, and whatsoever faith entertains must be apt to produce love to God. It is to give ourselves wholly up to Christ and to become disciples of his doctrine. This is an act of love, reflected upon faith; or an act of faith, leaning upon love. To have faith is to believe all God's promises, and the conditions of the promise which concerns our duty. For the covenant of the Gospel is the great object of faith, and that supposes our duty to answer grace. Faith must be a persuasion so strong as to make us undertake the doing of all duty which Christ built upon the foundation of believing. Works III, 145-146.

The second reference is appreciative of Taylor's account of pardon. In Holy Dying where Taylor was contrasting the Old Testament definition of pardon as the removal of punishment with the Christian understanding he wrote:

> 'Pardon of sins in the gospel is sanctification. Christ came to take away our sins, by turning every one of us from our iniquities (Acts 3:26). And there is not in the nature of the thing any expectation of pardon, or sign or signification of it, but so far as the thing itself discovers itself. As we hate sin, grow in grace, and arrive at the state of holiness, which is also a state of repentance and imperfection, but yet of sincerity of heart and diligent endeavour; in the same degree we are to judge concerning the forgiveness of sins. For, indeed, that is the evangelical forgiveness, and it signifies our pardon, because it effects it, or rather it is in the nature of the thing, so that we are to inquire into no hidden records. Forgiveness of sins is not a secret sentence, a word, or a record, but it is a state of change effected upon us; and upon ourselves we are to look for it, to read it and understand it.' (L.1,47-48). [91]

Wesley had found the note of assurance which he had thought to be lacking and this was the sole point he had to make in what was a subsidiary conclusion:

> In all this he appears to steer in the middle road exactly, to give assurance of pardon to the penitent, but to no one else (L.1,48).

These were the issues which Wesley raised upon reading Jeremy Taylor. His own intense concern for a personal faith in which forgiveness and assurance were implicates partly accounts for his criticisms which are seldom compelling. But there was a further reason for confusion. À Kempis and Taylor had convincingly expounded the pattern and the intention of the Christian life. The "narrow way to heaven" had become very clear to the

---

91. Taylor, Works, 111, 425.

young Wesley and, therefore, he always looked back to their contribution with gratitude.[92] However, his remarks also reveal that the content of faith and, consequently, the means by which a man may live a life of holiness had not been clarified. This seems to be the problem behind his attempt to restate the nature of faith and hope and their relations. For Taylor, hope was an extension of faith as faith was an eschatologically determined hope. But Wesley understood faith to be a peculiar assent to the covenant promise of God, whereas hope had an additional ground. It depended upon the opinion of the believer as to his own sincerity in regard to the conditions of that promise.[93] It is too early to look for a Christological foundation for either faith or hope and so Wesley's concluding syllogism to this matter described not only the limit of his thought but also the nature of his concern:

> If God be true, and I am sincere, then I am to hope. But God is true, and I am sincere (there is the pinch): Therefore I am to hope (L.1,47).

On the other hand there was a distinct affirmation in regard to the Christian's life being a process in love. Perfect love, as the end of true religion, was the intention of a life bent on holiness. In his introduction to the section on "The Love of God" in Holy Living, Taylor had written:

> Love is the greatest thing that God can give us, for Himself is love; and it is the greatest thing, we can give to God; for it will also give

---

92. The scriptural phrase is used by Taylor in the Dedication of Holy Living, 111,3.

93. Cf. L.1,111 to Ann Glanville (Oct.3,1731), "...our hope is sincerity, not perfection; not to do well, but to do our best."

> ourselves, and carry with it all that is ours. The apostle calls it the band of perfection; it is old, and it is new, and it is the great commandment, and it is all the commandments; for it is the fulfilling of the law. [94]

Wesley, in his maturity, found no reason to alter those words or depart from such presuppositions.

4. THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS AND JOHN NORRIS

In order to preserve a historical order we turn now to that group of seventeenth-century Anglican theologians known as the Cambridge Platonists.[95] John Wesley knew the work of John Smith (1616-1652), Ralph Cudworth (1617-1685), Nathaniel Culverwell (1618-1651) and Henry More (1614-1687) in particular,

---

94. Taylor Works, 111,156. In his very much abridged extract of Holy Living in A Christian Library Wesley retains this paragraph intact, C.L. 9,200.

95. The most extensive treatment of the Platonists is still by John Tullock, Rational Theology in England in the Seventeenth Century (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1874) Vol.11. Also valuable, F.J.Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists (London: Dent, 1924), G.R.Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, chap.111, H.R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, chaps. 111,IV, Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James Pettegrove (Austin; University of Texas, 1953), Robert Hoopes, Right Reason in the English Renaissance Harvard University Press, 1962) chap.IX. On individuals, J.A.Passmore, Ralph Cudworth (Cambridge, 1951) and an exceptionally fine study by Aharon Lichtenstein, Henry More, The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist (Harvard University Press, 1962). Lichtenstein's Essay on Bibliography and Selected Bibliography is most useful.

and published their writings in A Christian Library.[96] The thought of John Norris of Bemerton (1657-1711), who has been called "the last of the Cambridge Platonists," and whose works Wesley read extensively while at Oxford, will be of special interest.[97]

Paul O. Kristeller provides a perspective for the phenomenon of platonism in England following the Reformation:

> In an age of passionate and often violent religious dispute such as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the syncretism of the Platonists was clearly a source of inspiration for the advocates of peaceful discussion, of moderation and tolerance, from Erasmus to Bodin; and at a later stage, it inspired the theories of natural religion, deism, and of pantheism; and it was no coincidence that, during the religious controversies of seventeenth-century England, the moderate, latitudinarian position in theology found some of its chief supporters among the Cambridge Platonists.[98]

The Cambridge men, although working generally in a more rarified atmosphere, faithfully reflected the methodology and

---

96. Wesley published very full extracts of all ten of Smith's Select Discourses, Christian Library (30 vols.) Vol.XI; Cudworth's famous sermon before The House of Commons on The Life of Christ (1 John 2:3,4) is in C.L.IX; Extracts from the Works of Nathaniel Culverwell in C.L. IX and X; Five sermons by Henry More in C.L.XXIII.

97. See note 116, infra.

98. Facets of the Renaissance, The Arensberg Lectures, 1956 (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1959) p. 97.

spirit of the Anglican tradition which has been observed, for example, in Jeremy Taylor. They rejected categorically the idea of a doctrinal system, for, divine truth, as John Smith claimed, "is better understood, as it unfolds itself in the purity of men's hearts and lives, than in all those subtle niceties into which curious wits may lay it forth."[99] Assuming the doctrinal fundamentals of the Church, they aimed at a restatement in terms which were intellectually defensible, morally compelling and experientially real.

In particular, they turned against that doctrine which had been firmly held within the walls of Emmanuel-the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.[100] The determinism of the horribile decretum and the stifling effect this doctrine had upon moral integrity were repudiated. Their own positive stress was upon the unconfined goodness and love of God as the ground, and therefore,

---

99. "And therefore our Saviour, who is the great master of it, would not, while he was here on earth, draw it up into any system or body, nor would his disciples after him...not being indeed so careful to stock and enrich the world with opinions and notions, as with true piety, and a Godlike pattern for purity, as the best way to thrive all spiritual understanding." The True Way or Method of attaining Divine Knowledge, sect.1, John Smith, Select Discourses (London: Rivington, 1821), p.11-12. Wesley C.L.XI, 144-145. Smith's best known quotation on this point is, of course, "Were I indeed to define Divinity, I should rather call it a divine life, than a divine science. Ibid. p. 3 (C.L. XI, 139).

100. Cf. Powicke, op. cit., pp.5-8; Cragg, op. cit., p. 40.

the end, of the Christian life.[101] In his discourse on "Legal and Evangelical Righteousness," John Smith stated presuppositions which were common to this group:

> Divine love and bounty are the supreme rulers in heaven and earth, there is no such thing as sour despite and envy lodged in the bosom of that ever blessed Being above, whose name is LOVE, and all whose dispensations to the sons of men are but the dispreadings and distended radiations of his love, ...of whose benign influences we are then only deprived when we hide and withdraw ourselves from them. [102]

The summary heading to the sixth chapter of this discourse indicates the effect this prior decision has upon the meaning of faith:

> How the gospel-righteousness is conveyed to us by faith made to appear from these two considerations. 1. The gospel lays a strong foundation of a cheerful dependence upon the grace and love of God, and affiance to it.... 2. A true evangelical faith is no lazy or languid thing, but an ardent breathing and thirsting after divine grace and righteousness: it looks beyond a mere pardon of sin, and mainly

---

101. Henry More's opposition is to be seen clearly in the following lines from Psychathanasia:

> O belch of hell! O horrid blasphemy!
> That Heaven's unblemished beauty thus doth stain
> And brand God's nature with such infamy:
> Can Wise, Just, Good, do ought that's harsh or vain?

Cited, Cassirer, op. cit. p.127. It is interesting to compare with this some lines of Charles and John Wesley written at the height of another battle with Calvinism: The Poetical Works, Ed. Osborn, 13 Volumes (London, 1869) (i.e. Volume III) Hymns on God's Everlasting Love" (1741) XI, 14 p.26; XVII, 3 p.34; IX, 9-10 p.67; "Another," 13, p. 81. (The brothers did not distinguish their hymns in this anonymous publication).

102. Select Discourses p.361 (C.L. XI, 306).

> pursues after an inward participation of the divine nature. The mighty power of a living faith in the love and goodness of God, discoursed of throughout the whole chapter. [103]

It was natural for the Cambridge men to seek and find support in the writings of the older Platonists of the Eastern Church. Their understanding of the design of God in creation and redemption approximated closely to that which became evident in the writings of Clement and Macarius.[104] In the discourse, "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion," John Smith divides his subject into the following areas: the rise and origin of religion, its nature and essence, its properties and operations, its progress and, finally, its term and end.[105] An implicit teleology is apparent in his heading to the first chapter:

> The nobleness of religion in regard of its original and fountain: it comes from heaven and moves toward heaven again. God the first excellency and primitive

---

103. Ibid. p. 359 (C.L.XI,304). Faith is here defined as "that powerful attractive which by a strong and divine sympathy draws down the virtue of heaven into the souls of men....that divine impress that invincibly draws and sucks them in by degrees into the Divinity, and so unites them more and more to the center of life and love." Idem. The Cambridge Platonists were bound to deal with the problem of reconciling Paul and James. Smith's general solution is, "God's justifying of sinners in pardoning and remitting their sins carries in it a necessary reference to the sanctifying of their natures; without which justification would rather be a glorious name than a real privilege to the souls of men." Ibid. p.355 (C.L.XI, 301).

104. Cf. e.g. title pages to the several Select Discourses, also Powicke, op. cit. p. 108.

105. Ibid. p. 403. (C.L. XI, 333).

> perfection. All perfections and excellencies in any kind are to be measured by their approach to, and participation of, the first perfection. [106]

It was not for nothing that John Smith referred to Platonism as the "Church's loving nurse."[107]

Although the perfections and design of God should be known by natural reason, revelation is necessary because of the impairment of reason and virtue since the Fall. The following passage shows, however, that revelation subscribes to the declared ontology:

> God has provided the truth of divine revelation which...clearly discovers the way of our return to God, from whom we have fallen. And this truth the Scripture is wont to set forth under the name of grace, as proceeding merely from the free bounty and overflowings of the divine love...He that made our souls in his own image and likeness, can easily find a way into them. The word that God speaks, having found a way into the soul, imprints itself there as with the point of a diamond...Men may teach the grammar and rhetoric, but God teaches the divinity. Thus it is God alone acquaints the soul with the truths of revelation. [108]

Affirming the Platonists' principle that there is no union or communion between pure Divinity and impure sinners, Smith

---

106. Ibid. p.408. (C.L.XI,337). Cf. "The great design and plot of the gospel is to open and unfold to us the true way of recourse to God; a contrivance for uniting the souls of men to Him, and deriving a participation of God to man, to bring in everlasting righteousness." Ibid. p.310 (C.L.XI, 273). Cf. also Henry More's sermon, "On recovering the Divine Likeness." in C.L.XXIII, 136-149.

107. Cited Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p.6.

108. Select Discourses p.411-412. (C.L.XI, 339-340).

claims the necessity of a Mediator.[109] Christ, in taking a human nature, showed that God desired to dignify that nature again and also provided the pattern for Christian aspiration. The guilty sinner is assured that propitiation and atonement has been made and that all men are redeemed potentially. Actual salvation, however, depends upon a life of faith and godliness.[110] In the Cambridge Platonists there is a common reluctance to proclaim Christ in all his offices. The subtleties and the antinomian liberties which beset fiduciary and imputative doctrines were to be avoided. John Smith gave voice to this hesitation:

> Far be it from me to disparage in the least the merit of Christ's blood, his becoming obedient unto death, whereby we are justified. But I doubt sometimes some of our dogmata and notions about justification may puff us up in far higher and goodlier conceits of ourselves than God hath of us; and we profanely make the unspotted righteousness of Christ to serve only as a covering wherein to wrap up our foul deformities and filthy vices.[111]

---

109. Ibid. p.373 (C.L.XI,314 where Wesley retains the principle but omits the indebtedness to the Platonists). This christological section is an appendix to Smith's Discourse on "Legal and Evangelical Righteousness."

110. So Smith can write, "A true gospel faith...doth not only pursue an ambitious project of raising the soul immaturely to the condition of a darling favorite with heaven, while it is unripe for it, by procuring a mere empty pardon of sin; it desires not only to stand upon clear terms with heaven by procuring the crossing of all the debt-books of our sins there; but it rather pursues after an internal participation of the divine nature." p.366. (C.L.XI,309). cf. p.374 (C.L. XI,314-315.

111. Ibid.p.350 (C.L.XI,298). Cf. also Cudworth, "Antinomian error, too often insinuated under the notion of imputed righteousness, as if there were no necessity of inherent righteousness, and a real victory over sin, in order to salvation." Cited Tulloch, op.cit. 11,239.

There are few attempts to develop a doctrine of the atonement in the literature of the Cambridge Platonists. Christ is the efficient means to the final restoration of man to God. But the gospel does not speak of Christ extra nos but, "in Christ inwardly formed in our hearts."[112] This means that perfection as the gift of grace and the telos of the Christian life is not simply futuristic. Degrees of perfection may be known in this life.

> Where a spirit of religion is, there is the central force of heaven itself, quickening and enlivening those that are informed by it in their motions toward heaven... Neither does true grace make some feeble assays toward heaven, but by a mighty energy within itself, it is always soaring up higher and higher into heaven... It is not an airy speculation of heaven as a thing to come, that can satisfy his hungry desires, but a real possession of it in this life (John 6:54, 1 John 5:11, 13. [113]

So the constant reference of the Platonists was to the eternal order proposed by the divine goodness and realized in the life of holiness. They were preoccupied with God's love rather than his justice, with morality rather than sin and

---

112. Cudworth, A Sermon preached before the House of Commons (Cambridge: Daniel, 1647), p.42. "The very pith and kernel of it (the Gospel), consists in Christ inwardly formed in our hearts. Nothing is truly ours, but what lives in our spirits. Salvation itself cannot save us, as long as it is only without us." pp.42-43. (From these words Wesley took the title for his edition in C.L.IX,p.369. The quotation is found on p.392). Cf. also John Smith, Select Discourses pp.365-370 (C.L.XI, 309-312).

113. Ibid. pp.475-476 (C.L.XI, 379-380). Cf. Cudworth, "Holiness is the best thing that God himself can bestow upon us, either in this world or the world to come. True evangelical holiness, that is, Christ formed in the hearts of believers, is the very quintessence of the Gospel." Sermon, p.47 (C.L.IX,394). Cf. G.P.H.Pawson on Whichcote: The Cambridge Platonists and Their Place in Religious Thought (London:S.P.C.K.,1930), "The final goal is the perfection of present experience; it is the unification and culmination of all loves in the love of God. Here as there Heaven is happiness." p.30.

with redemption as a restoration rather than a reformation. If the Calvinist or Hobbesian disjunctions had broken the "golden chain" which linked man to God, they were concerned to stress a given unity. They proclaimed the reconciled harmony of God's world.

Whatever may be said of their heirs, the Latitudinarians, the Cambridge Platonists retained a sense of wonder. Their reason was no simple intellection, but it was enlightened and sustained by the Spirit.[114] But this spirituality and other elements of their conservative sensitivity could not easily be preserved. Their precious definition of reason as "the candle of the Lord" soon gave way to a rationalism and, with a revised epistemology, their morality was absorbed into a humanism. It could be said that their rejection of dogmatism and their affirmation of the godly life were together responsible for the separation which did occur between reason and revelation, faith and morality.

John Norris

In 1734, John Wesley made his second venture in publishing.

---

114. Cf. the summary by Robert Hoopes "Convinced on which co[illegible] of the identity between Being and Intelligibility, an ideal in which the soul's union with God is one with the mind's knowledge of truth, they set the first test of wisdom as an awareness of the end for which man was born. And the light by which that knowledge was revealed, as well as the means by which man was sustained in his efforts to fulfill the obligations imposed upon him by that knowledge, they found in the "candle of the Lord," that is, right reason. op.cit. p.185.

This time it was A Treatise on Christian Prudence extracted from a work by John Norris (1657-1711) the later successor to George Herbert at the rectory at Bemerton.[115] A scholar, poet and ethicist, Norris was a friend of Henry More, a disciple of Malebranche and a critic of the empiricism of John Locke. Historians of philosophy have been divided as to Norris's position in the stream of English Platonism. He has been styled "the last of the Cambridge Platonists," but, in fact he was a fellow of Oxford and this, as far as English University historians are concerned, would disqualify him from that group.[116] The problem of definition, however, does not alter the conclusion that in the work of Norris there is at least a continuity of intention with the men of Cambridge.

In A Treatise Concerning Christian Prudence (1710) Norris gave practical expression to the current Anglican teaching on the teleological character of the Christian's life in the world. The general indebtedness to Thomistic categories is clear

---

115. Cf. Richard Green, Bibliography, no.2 for the several editions. The extract was also republished in A Christian Library (30 vol.ed.), XXX. Wesley read Norris consistently from 1725-1734. Cf. V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, pp. 305-318.

116. The designation is from Gilbert McEwen's introduction to Norris's Cursory Reflections upon a Book call'd, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690). The Augustan Reprint Society Publication No.93 (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library,1961), p.2. Cf. also, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church ed.F.L.Cross (Oxford,1961), p.965.
For the contrary view, Tulloch, Rational Theology, 11,453, "His philosophical activity only commences with the termination of the Cambridge movement. He carries it forward to another age, but he does not himself belong to it. Norris, indeed stands by himself in the history of English philosophy, the solitary Platonist of the Revolution era, who handed on the torch of Idealism into the next century, till it was grasped by the vigorous and graceful hands of Berkeley." Cf. also F.J.Powicke, The Cambridge Platonists, p.v.

from Norris's definition of prudence as a "practical knowledge of the best end and the best means to attain it." "The End of every reasonable creature is God: for He alone is the true object of our happiness."[117]

The prudent man will choose those means which God has ordained for this end.[118] God's primary means are the commandments, the purpose of which is to bring man to Himself.[119] The two dispositions particularly necessary to qualify man for the fruition of God are charity and purity.[120] The spirit of Norris' writing is conveyed in this summary:

---

117. The Wesley edition used is the Third (Bristol: Farley,1749). References are to chapters and sections. This enumeration concurs with the Christian Library edition (These citations, I, 1,2).
For the account of prudence in Thomas Aquinas, cf.the index in Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, ed.C.Pegis (New York: Random,1945),11,1148a,b. Cf.also Charles J.O'Neil, Imprudence in St.Thomas Aquinas, The Aquinas Lecture,1955 (Milwaukee, Marquette University, 1955).
It is of interest also to compare the definition of Jeremy Taylor, "It is the duty of Christian prudence to choose the end of a Christian, that which is perfective of a man, satisfactory to reason, the rest of a Christian, and the beatification of his spirit; and that is, to choose and desire and propound to himself heaven and the fruition of God as the end of all his acts and arts, his designs and purposes." Sermon XX On Christian Prudence, Works (Heber-Eden) IV,573-574.
H.R.McAdoo has described the Latitudinarian stress on prudence especially in the work of John Wilkins. He shows also the general indebtedness to the Summa Theologica in seventeenth-century Anglicanism, The Spirit of Anglicanism, chap.V, especially pp.212-224. That John Wesley retained the basic definition is clear, Works VII, 43.

118. Ibid. 1,7.

119. Ibid. 1,8.

120. Ibid. 1,14-16. Cf. Henry More's sermon, "On Pure Religion", A Christian Library XXIII, 173-175.

> Every prudent Christian, therefore, looks upon the commandments of God, not as so many imperious curbs and retrenchments of his liberty, nor as so many arbitrary impositions...but as so many kind provisions for our happiness, and so many merciful instructions to bring us to our true end: and in this view he yields them obedience, not such as is forced and violent, servile and extorted by fear ...but such as is liberal and ingenuous, and wherein love is the prevailing principle; as becomes one who is under a government so good and gracious, and so every way directed and administered for the best advantage of the subject, as that of God is. [121]

In the second chapter of this treatise, Norris makes a distinction between "almost" and "altogether" Christians, a distinction which Wesley was to make his own.[122] True religion consists in an entire love and a complete obedience.[123] If the gracious commandments of God are the immediate means to holiness and happiness, there are also subordinate means which are either appointed by God or recommended by prudence.[124] The ordained means are prayer, the reading of the scriptures, the hearing of the Word preached, attendance upon the sacraments and finally, the communion of the Church.[125] The prudential means are the government of the senses, the understanding and the will and affections.[126]

---

121. Ibid., 1,17.

122. Ibid. 11,5-12. Cf. Wesley's sermon, The Almost Christian, Works V, 17-25. The source of the expression for Norris and Wesley is, of course, Acts 26:28.

123. Ibid. 11,8.

124. Ibid. 111, 1.

125. Ibid. 111, 2-7. Wesley also used this distinction between instituted and prudential means of grace, and generally follows Norris's order for the instituted means. Cf. Works V,188, VIII, 322-324 (Question 48), Journal 11, 359-362.

126. Ibid. IV, 2-11.

The final chapter concludes with an admonition to keep "the Gospel and Example of Christ before us." Over against the world's concern for the present, "let us be intent upon providing for that future life, which will soon be present, and never past."[127] Although Norris does not plead for a "hermit's solitude" or an excommunication from society, he does encourage that retirement which allows man to attend to the "one thing needful."[128] Perhaps such advice, added to that of à Kempis, influenced Wesley's decision of 1734 to remain at Oxford rather than risk the world at Epworth.[129] Be that as it may, Norris's treatise further supported Wesley's quest for inward holiness and strengthened his conviction of the necessity to be "altogether Christian." These directions, held along with an insistence upon the need for the means of grace, would be maintained by Wesley all his days.

Some mention should also be made of another treatise by Norris which Wesley read while at Oxford and which he published in 1734 and recommended in later years: Reflections upon the Conduct of Human Life with Reference to Learning and Knowledge.[130] It began with a censuring of the exaggerated importance attached

---

127. Ibid. V, 11.

128. Idem., also 1,6.

129. Letters I, 166-178.

130. Wesley's extract was generally assigned to 1741. See Richard Green's Bibliography no. 25. But a 1734 edition has been discovered. This means that Wesley published both of Norris' treatises in that year. Cf. A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley compiled by Frank Baker, MS. 1966, #2a, #25. This treatise was also included in A Christian Library XXX.

to branches of learning which are not "perfective of the understanding."[131] The proper means to this end are a stance of passive yet intellectual devotion to the subject of truth (Malebranche), a purity of heart through which the perception is cleared and finally, prayer. Such methods, Norris adds, are true to both scripture and reason.[132]

Norris confesses that "the utmost knowledge a man can arrive at in this world, by his own endeavours, is very inconsiderable," but that this is of no serious consequence.[133] For it is goodness and virtue which are indispensably necessary to holiness and happiness. It is these which are commanded by God and are the means to our final perfection.[134] The attainment of the end is grounded conditionally upon "the purchase of his Saviour's death, who has also merited grace for his assistance in the performance of it."[135] Here Norris provides a statement on "the present state of man" and the meaning of redemption:

---

131. The same reference procedure applies as for the former treatise. (This citation, 1,3). The edition used was the Third Edition of 1755 (London: Cock). At the end of this edition is appended "A Scheme of Books suited to the preceding Reflections." Beginning with the Bible, the list includes works by Boehm(e), Nelson and Francke; doctrinal writings by Pearson and Fell; philosophy of Derham and Ray; astronomy by Whiston and Newton; Burnet's History of the Reformation; works by Spenser and Milton; Latin prose of Cyprian, Erasmus and Augustine; Greek prose of Plato's dialogues, Ignatius, Ephraim Syrus, Macarius, Chrysostom, etc. In all, a formidable list.
For Wesley's later recommendation of Norris, Letters III,175.

132. Ibid. II, 3-11. For Norris's indebtedness to Malebranche, and for his philosophy generally, John H. Muirhead, The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy, (New York: Macmillan, 1931), chaps. IV,V.

133. Ibid. III, 4-7.

134. Ibid. III, 8.

135. Ibid. III, 11.

> Thus stands the case between God and man. Man was made in a state of innocence and perfection, in perfect favour and communion with God, his true good, and in a capacity so to continue. From this excellent state he wilfully fell, and by his fall so disabled himself, that he could not, by his own strength, repent, and so provoked God, that though he could have repented, yet he could not have been pardoned without satisfaction made to the divine justice. This satisfaction man was not able to make, or any other creature for him. Whereupon God in great mercy ordained a Mediator, his own Son, God and man, between himself and his lapsed creature, who, by the sacrifice of himself, should effect two things, answerable to the double necessity of man: First, make repentance available, which otherwise would not have been so; and, Secondly, merit grace for him, that he might be able to repent. And this is what is meant by the restoration or redemption of man, which thus far is universal and unconditional. [136]

Norris, with Smith and Cudworth, stressed that this mediatorial work has merely placed man in a "reconcileable state."

> He is yet only in a capacity or possibility of pardon and reconciliation, which is then and then only, reduced to act, when he truly believes, i.e. with such a faith as is productive of all inward and outward holiness; with which he may, without which he cannot be saved, notwithstanding Christ hath died to save him...For the design of His death was not to make holiness unnecessary, but to make it available; not to procure a privilege of being saved without it, but that we might be saved with it. [137]

These words have been cited at some length because of the clarity of Norris's "Arminian" position. They also provide a typical statement of the Anglican rationale against all forms of antinomianism.

Returning to the main theme of the treatise Norris asserts that knowledge was given to man that he might live in "compliance

---

136. Ibid. III, 9.

137. Ibid. III, 10.

with the design of God." All knowledge which does not contribute to this end is vanity and impertinence. Plato was wise to define philosophy as "the theory of death," in the sense that right reason attends to the end of human existence.[138] His last lines draw us back to the center of the Platonists' description of the divine life:

> A man may indeed have knowledge without love; but he that loves, though he want sciences humanly acquired, yet he will know more than human wisdom can teach him, because he hath that Master within him who teacheth man knowledge.[139]

These two works of Norris reveal a typical example of the interfusion of theological elements with a platonic idealism. His thought has a distinctly trinitarian character and includes a more substantial Christology than was to be found in the earlier Platonists. Any Augustinian realism, however, tends to be subsumed under the strong teleological pattern which owed something to the formulations of St. Thomas. It is this pattern which provided the structures for his work on prudence and for his practical reflections upon knowledge. John Norris would have confirmed many of the impressions which Wesley had gained from his earlier reading. Here again was an unequivocal insistence upon "the whole duty of man," "the one thing needful," the obedience and love of the "altogether Christian." Norris's contribution also lay in his lucid articulation of the necessity for such a life. This necessity was grounded on the purpose of God whose creation was to be as perfect at the end as it was in the beginning. In both respects, for the form of the argument and for content, these two treatises were of value.

---

138. Ibid. III,12,29, as in John Smith, Select Discourses, p.13. (C.L.XI,146).
139. Ibid. Conclusion.

5. HENRY SCOUGAL

Another work which was of major importance to John Wesley and which can best be considered in conjunction with the thought of the Platonists was Henry Scougal's The Life of God in the Soul of Man. This slim volume, first published in 1677, was one of the most popular treatises at the turn of the century and was known and recommended by the family at Epworth. It circulated through the membership of the Holy Club at Oxford and George Whitfield, to whom Charles Wesley had given a copy, acknowledged that it was instrumental in his conversion. John Wesley used it while in Georgia and later published an abridgement as well as a number of Scougal's sermons.[140]

This Scottish Episcopal divine (1650-1678), although generally holding to the Calvinist theology, had been influenced by the mystic writers and the English Platonists, particularly More and Smith. The spirit and material of both his devotional classic and his sermons reflect their basic thought on the nature of true religion. Although it would not be correct to say that Scougal's mysticism was simply a refuge from the storm, there is

---

140. For Susannah Wesley's estimation of Scougal, Stevenson's Memorials, p.207. Whitfield's testimony is recorded by Tyerman, Life of George Whitfield, 1,27, cf. 17,31. For Wesley's reading in Georgia, Journal 1,167,n.2,247f. Two books by Dugald Butler, John Wesley and George Whitfield in Scotland, (Edinburgh: Blackwood,1898) and Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1899), although inclined to special pleading are still of interest. Martin Schmidt, John Wesley, summarizes Scougal's treatise and influence but with some inaccuracies, pp.53-68. The first edition of Wesley's abridgement appeared in 1744 and six editions had been published by 1796, Green, Bibliography, No.51. Wesley also included Scougal's sermons in A Christian Library (30 vol. ed.) XXIII.

implicit a quietist reaction to the almost ceaseless controversy which had plagued the religious life of seventeenth-century Scotland.[141]

The Life of God in the Soul of Man begins with a definition of true religion over against formal orthodoxy, external performances and ecstatic devotion:

> True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or in the apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed within us. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it a divine life.[142]

As in John Smith, religion is a "divine life" in those who are no longer constrained by laws, but by a new nature engendered

---

141. F.J.Powicke made this observation in his work on the Cambridge Platonists, op.cit., p.198, note 1, and has been confirmed by the Scottish historian, G.D.Henderson, The Burning Bush (Edinburgh: St. Andrews,1957) pp.97,99ff. Henderson's essay provides a succinct account of Scougal's life and thought. Cf. also his Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland (Cambridge, 1937), pp.136f, cf.92f,126,220f. Henderson shows that both Scougal and Robert Leighton, whose work Wesley also published (C.L.XX), had prized the Theologica Germanica, the writings of à Kempis, Tauler, François de Sales, St. Teresa and the life of de Renty. For further comparisons between Scougal and the English Platonists, H.R.McAdoo, The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology, p.157f.

142. The edition of Scougal's Works used by Wesley was the Cockburn Edition, (London: Downing and Strahan, 1726). Cf. Wesley's preface to Scougal's Sermons in C.L.XXIII, p.327 with the last page of Cockburn's preface (no pagination). Wesley prints verbatim Cockburn's biographical paragraph. References are to the Cockburn Edition and to the second Wesley edition (Bristol: Farley, 1748) which according to Green's Bibliography was printed from the same type as the first edition of 1744. The quotations from Scougal used in this section are printed by Wesley without significant alterations or elisions. (The above quotation, Cockburn, p.4-5; Wesley p.4).

by the love of God. This divine love makes the Christian become a law unto himself.

> Quis legem det amantibus?
> Major est amor lex ipse sibi.[143]

Because God is the author of this divine life in the new man by the power of the Holy Spirit, religion, as a participation in the divine nature, reflects the divine perfections. Faith, therefore, is the root of this new life and the chief branches are "love to God, charity to men, purity and humility."[144] Scougal's understanding of the nature and object of faith is interesting especially because it anticipates Wesley's common definition based on Hebrews 11.1:

> Faith hath the same place in the divine life which sense hath in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things: It extends itself unto all divine truths; but in our lapsed estate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcileableness to sinners thro' a Mediator, and therefore receiving its denomination from that principal object, is ordinarily termed faith in Jesus Christ.[145]

---

143. "Who shall prescribe a Law to those that love?
Love's a more powerful Law which doth them move."
p.10; p.5.

144. p.17; p.10.
"These are the highest perfections that either men or angels are capable of, the very foundation of heaven laid in the soul, and he who hath attained them needs not desire to pry into the hidden rolls of God's decrees, or search the volumes of heaven to know what is determined about his everlasting condition; but he may find a copy of God's thoughts concerning him written in his own breast. His love to God may give him assurance of God's favour to him." p.20;11.

145. p.18; p.10.
Cf. Wesley, "Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God, and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world, what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God." An Earnest Appeal, Works VIII, p.4 cf. Letters II,381f.

Scougal's definition of religion means that it is better understood by actions than by words and he proceeds to describe its character as exemplified in the Saviour's devotion to the will of God in his diligence, charity, purity and humility.[146] Christ, however, is not merely an exemplar. Here Scougal's teaching is more specifically Christological than the English Platonists. God has committed the care of fallen man to the Son of his love. The design of his coming was to "recover and propagate the divine life, and restore the image of God in the soul."[147] His death was a propitiation that "God might at once be just, and also the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."[148] Religion then is an absolute reliance upon God's work of grace. Natural endeavour can neither produce nor merit the divine assistance. It is the

---

146. pp.21-32; 11-17.

147. p.62; p.30.

148. In his sermon, "On the Passion of our Saviour," Scougal outlines the meaning of redemption: "The race of mankind, by their apostacy from God, were become liable to his wrath, and all the dreadful effects of his vengeance; the eternal Son of God, the wisdom of the Father, whose delights were always with the sons of men, resolved to make up the breach, and restore us again unto his Father's love; but first he must repair the honour of God, and secure the authority of the divine law, which could not be done but by some signal evidence of God's displeasure against sin, and some valuable compensation of the punishment which had been denounced against it; and therefore himself was pleased to take our nature upon him, appear in the similitude of sinful flesh, to lead a miserable and afflicted life in the world, and at last to offer it up as a propitiation for us; that 'mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace might kiss each other;' and that 'God might at once be just, and also the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.'" Cockburn Ed. pp.329-330. Wesley, Christian Library XXIII, 453-454 (verbatim).

presence of the Holy Spirit which awakens man to God's intention in Christ.[149]

Scougal defines sin as a temporary negation of the divine love but love will triumph over its usurpation:

> Why should we think it impossible that true goodness and universal love should ever come to sway and prevail in our souls? Is not this their primitive state and condition, their native and genuine constitution as they came first from the hands of their maker? Sin and corruption are but usurpers, yet <u>from the beginning it was not so</u>.[150]

Man in his sin must await the intervention of "a stroke of omnipotence" to effectually regenerate him,[151] but meanwhile he is to prepare himself by the avoidance of sins and temptation and by self-examination and renunciation. Above all, in this "holy war," he is to meditate on the goodness and love of God.[152] These are the means which assist man in his coming to faith and, after justification, are to be continually practiced in order that the new life be strengthened.[153] In addition, the attendance upon the Holy Sacrament, in which "all the instruments of religion do meet together," is necessary for the nourishing of this life.[154]

---

149. pp.63,66; pp. 31,32.

150. p.64; p.31.

151. p.67; p.33.

152. pp.65, 69-101; 32,33-46.

153. p.110; omitted in Wesley's extract.

154. 110-111; 48-49. "Certainly the neglect, or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that bedwarfs our religion, and makes us continue of so low a size.

There are unmistakeable elements of mysticism in Scougal's work. Perfectionis ac foelicitatis summum est uniri Deo.[155] However, although the divine life meant a union with God and a participation in his perfections, there is no thought of mystical absorption. The grace of God in Christ made known by the Holy Spirit is the sole foundation of the new life. This life would be sustained by the same grace which made beneficial those instituted and prudential means which God had provided. There are also unequivocal elements which explain George Whitfield's testimony that through Scougal's teaching God showed him "that he must be born again or be damned."[156]

Scougal's mysticism is, therefore, qualified not only by the importance he attached to God's appointed means of grace, but also by a Calvinian awe for the absolute distinction between God and man and the necessity of the mediatorial work of Christ.[157]

---

155. This phrase is found on the title page of the Cockburn edition.

156. Tyerman, George Whitfield, 1,27.
In his sermon, "That there are but a small number saved," Scougal deals with the problem of relating the attributes of God and draws the following conclusion: "There is no strife among the attributes of God, that one of them should swallow up another, mercy is open to all that forsake their sins, but justice shall seize on those who continue in them. That compassion which made God to give his dearest Son for the redemption of mankind, will never prevail for the pardon and deliverance of any impenitent sinner: abused goodness will certainly turn into fury, and infinite mercy being despised, shall bring down upon sinners all the dreadful effects of an omnipotent vengeance." Cockburn, p.225; Wesley C.L.XXIII, 401 (verbatim). Cf. The Life of God p.62; p.30.

157. Here issue is taken with Martin Schmidt's conclusion that for Scougal Jesus "signifies the ethico-religious Prototype." John Wesley, p.57. There is more substance in Scougal's Christology than Schmidt will allow.

But finally, it is the primacy of the love of God, so central in the teaching of the English Platonists as well as the mystics, which is the chief motif in Scougal's treatise.[158] Dogmatic inconsistencies are allowed to remain, for his concern was not with a religious system but with a life perfected by love.

6. THE MYSTIC WRITERS

To define mysticism has always been a notoriously difficult task.[159] In his later life John Wesley recognized the difficulty and suggested the following explanation:

> If you study the mystic writers, you will find as many religions as books; and for this plain reason, each of them makes his own experience the standard of religion (L.VI,44).

Wesley's writings, both from his early and later periods, contain many references to the mystics, some pejorative, others appreciative. The aim in this section is to take account of Wesley's summaries and criticisms of those examples of mystical divinity which he read while at Oxford or in Georgia.

---

158. Speaking to the predestinarian problem Scougal wrote: "No, no, my friend, God is love, and he hath no pleasure in the ruin of his creatures: if they abuse his goodness and turn his grace into wantonness, and thereby plunge themselves into the greater depth of guilt and misery, this is the effect of their obstinate wickedness, and not the design of those benefits which he bestows." p.100; p.46.

159. E.G. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. Cross (Oxford, 1958), in spite of a long bibliography, resorts to a most economical description: "In general, an immediate knowledge of God attained in this present life through personal religious experience." (p.935b). Cf. Ray Petry's brief survey of the character of mysticism in his introduction to Late Medieval Mystics, Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XIII (London: S.C.M., 1957), pp.17-22.

The period of the mystics' positive effect upon Wesley may be dated roughly from 1725 until 1736 when he assembled his criticisms and generally described his disenchantment.[160] The influence of the mystical piety of the Eastern Fathers and of Thomas à Kempis has already been noted. Further, in describing the Anglican tradition of the seventeenth century it was shown how impossible it is to separate platonism from mysticism. As Gerald Cragg has pointed out, the Cambridge Platonists were all, in some degree, mystics.[161] The same was found to be true of Henry Scougal who expressed the major themes of practical mysticism in his definition and order of the religious life. Another decisive influence upon Wesley was William Law who, of course, was explicit in his indebtedness to the mystics. His work will be considered in the next section.

---

160. "The truth is, from the year 1725, I saw more and more of the nature of inward religion, chiefly by reading the writings of Mr. Law, and a few other mystic writers. Yet I never was "in the way of Mysticism." at all." Works X,403. "It is true, that for a while I admired the Mystic writers. But I dropped them, even before I went to Georgia; long before I knew or suspected anything as to justification by faith." Works XIII,410.
But Wesley did read the mystics while in Georgia. Cf.J.1,175, Diary March 4th, 1736 and p.219 (Diary). Also J.1,435 where he reflects on his becoming acquainted with the "writings of holy men in the German, Spanish and Italian tongues." For Wesley's reading of the mystics while at Oxford, V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley. Bibliography, pp.307-319. Cf. also Proc. W.H.S. 13, 25-29.

161. From Puritanism to the Age of Reason, pp.51f. Cf. also an interesting remark on Puritan mysticism by Geoffrey Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), "Puritan mysticism might seem almost a contradiction in terms. Yet, in a piety which was essentially a movement towards immediacy in communion with God, it would be strange if mysticism were to find no place. In point of fact, it is evident that the type of experience defined was keenly desired and gladly welcomed by at least the more radical among the Puritans." (p.147).

The major source for Wesley's early impressions of the mystic writers is a letter written to his brother, Samuel, toward the end of 1736. He began with a confession and then added his own limited definition:

> I think the rock on which I had the nearest made ship-wreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those who slight the means of grace (L.1,207).

He then went on to schematize the mystics' teaching, partly on the basis of hearsay and partly from his own reading of such representatives as Tauler, Molinos and the author of Theologica Germanica.

These mystics, according to Wesley's interpretation, held that only such means as are necessary to the attainment of love, which is the end of the Christian life, are to be considered useful. When this end is attained, the means cease. The 'deified' man, in his passivity, enjoys a contemplation which is above faith. Because he is guided by a divine light,he has renounced reason and is freed from images, thoughts and discourse. Hope is swallowed up in love, and sight, or something more than sight, takes the place of faith. Wesley's obvious concern to maintain his definition is clear as he returns to the question of the mystic's rejection of the means of grace. The mystic has no need of public prayer for he prays without ceasing. He does not need the Scriptures for he has immediate access to the divine will. Neither does he need the Lord's Supper for he lives in perpetual remembrance of Christ. The mystic's advice to the man who has not attained perfection is completely non-directive; either a man is converted to God or he is not. If he is not, his own will must guide him. If he is so guided by the Holy Spirit, he needs no

further direction. A man must choose such means as lead best to perfect love. Beyond all casuistical forms and prudential rules he will be taught by the Spirit and by his own experience. All thought of reward is rejected and the novice is warned against his desire to do good to others for such a desire runs the risk of being pride-ful. He is also to avoid disputation, for it is useless when directed to the imperfect and unnecessary in conversation with good men. (L.I, 208-210).

Wesley offers no further comment on his discursive summary. It is apparent, however, that his basic reason for censuring these writers was their depreciation of the means of grace. Hence his negative definition which indicates, at least, his churchmanship at this stage of his experience.[162] Yet there is more substance in this summary than is assumed by his definition, and there were elements here which persuaded Wesley, some to the point of permanent influence.

The solitariness of the mystic way seems to have appealed to him during the period at Oxford especially if this solitude could be had within the walls of the university. Inter sylvas

---

162. Cf. his sermon C1 "The Duty of Constant Communion," which originated in 1732. Works VII, 147-157. In a preface written in 1788 Wesley wrote that he had no cause to alter any of its sentiments.
That Samuel would have agreed with his brother's ecclesiastical concern is evident in some lines which he wrote on the death of William Morgan and which were published in 1736:

> To means of grace the last respect he showed,
> Nor sought new paths, as wiser than his God:
> Their sacred strength preserved him from extremes
> Of empty outside or enthusiast dreams;
> Whims of Molinos, lost in rapture's mist,
> Or Quaker, late-reforming Quietist.
> He knew that works our faith must here employ,
> And that 'tis heaven's great business to enjoy.
> (J.1,104-105).

Academi quaerere verum.[163] However, in 1729, he learned a lesson which he was never to forget. He met a "serious man" who told him that if he wished to serve God, he could not do this alone. He must "find companions or make them, for the Bible knows nothing of a solitary religion."[164] The Holy Club met this need for companionship and also for responsible social action.

More important still is a reflection which Wesley recorded in a later statement. He had been impressed by the mystics' "noble description of union with God and internal religion." (J.I, 420). But he had also found problems with their formulations. Wesley understood the mystical writers to be saying, "Love is all; all the commandments beside are only means to love: you must choose those which you feel are means to you, and use them as long as they are so." (Ibid). Apart from Wesley's concern for the instituted means of grace to which reference has been made, this claim raised the problem of the nature of faith and the validity of good works following faith. The mystics were granting a plenary dispensation from the divine command. They made both faith and good works appear "mean, flat and insipid." Hence they sponsored a new religion but one which was singularly

---

163. Works XIII, 409-410. Cf. J.I,416 (January 9th, 1738), L.VI,292.

164. J.I,468f and note 2. His father had also tried to make this clear. Cf. his letter to John, November 20th, 1734, where he is arguing against his son's decision to remain at Oxford rather than accept the charge at Epworth, "I cannot allow austerity or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness; nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life..." Stevenson, Memorials, p.145. In a letter written to Samuel Jr. his father complained that John's attitude and argument was "existical." Ibid. p.146.

unlike "that religion which Christ and his apostles live and taught." So Wesley concludes:

> All the other enemies of Christianity are triflers; the Mystics are the most dangerous of its enemies. They stab it in the vitals; and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them. (Ibid.).

Although a decision in regard to Wesley's relation to the mystics must await a treatment of certain aspects in his mature thought, some preliminary conclusion should be drawn as to their influence upon him in his formative period. The question as to whether Wesley, in any sense, embraced their teaching in this period has produced various replies. William Cannon, after citing Tyerman's denial of such a possibility and Cell's affirmative, gives his own conclusion:

> There is absolutely no reason for us to suspect that Wesley ever accepted any of the theological and philosophical tenets of mysticism. [165]

This judgment would seem to be justified by Wesley's attack which has just been cited, and is supported by a later declaration that he was never "in the way of mysticism at all." (W.X, 403). However some qualifications must be made to such an absolute conclusion. Wesley, of course, realized that the mystics characteristically had by-passed much that is distinctive in historic Christianity, and he criticized the speculative elements which he found in their writings. Ecclesiastically his position, based upon the authority

---

165. The Theology of John Wesley, p.61; cf. Tyerman, I,64 and The Rediscovery of John Wesley (New York: Henry Holt,1935), pp. 94,97-98. In order to draw this conclusion Cannon distinguishes theological and philosophical tenets from moral and spiritual practices, and allows that in regard to the latter Wesley did "try mysticism" but without comfort. It is questionable whether Wesley would have acknowledged this distinction.

and practice of his own tradition was quite clear. Where the order of mysticism denied the necessity of the means of grace, Wesley rejected it categorically. On the basis of the Anglican formularies he also criticized the mystics' depreciation of the necessity of faith and good works and their tendency to merge faith with holiness. The doctrine of justification, if it was present at all, was peripheric in their writings.

Yet there were those elements in mysticism which could be held as complimentary to the sacramental teaching and the piety of the Church of England and which were, in fact, intrinsic in the teaching of the seventeenth-century divines. These motifs - the primacy of divine love, salvation as restoration, the way of holiness and the goal of perfect love in union with God - were found to be pervasive in their theology and casuistry. These Wesley accepted. He had already realized that the way to heaven was the narrow way of inward holiness. As an Anglican, however, he insisted that this holiness must be continually informed by the grace which God provided through his Church. In his acceptance of some of the tenets of the mystic writers Wesley was simply subscribing to the stream of Anglican piety which had already found certain elements in mysticism and in Platonism to be supportive.

7. WILLIAM LAW

The figure who exerted a pervasive influence on the life and thought of the young Wesley was William Law. Not without

reason has he been named as the precursor of Methodism.[166] Through his writings and his personal interest he became an important dialogical partner in Wesley's development. While at Oxford Wesley read Law's a Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection which was published in 1726 and also A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life published in 1729.[167] He visited Law at Putney, took his advice and read the Theologica Germanica, corresponded with him on some pastoral problems at Oxford and also on his proposed mission to Georgia.[168] While in Georgia he preached "after the model" of Law's two treatises and claimed his support for his own under-

---

166. The relationship between Wesley and Law is treated in detail by J.H.Overton, William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic (London: Longmans, 1881), Stephen Hobhouse, William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927), J. Brazier Green, John Wesley and William Law (London: Epworth, 1945), Arthur W. Hopkinson, About William Law (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), Eric W. Baker, A Herald of the Evangelical Revival (London: Epworth, 1948), R.Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (Oxford, 1934) Chap.XVIII.
On Law as precursor, cf.Baker, pp.vii-viii.
Coke and Moore's verdict was, "This considerable writer was the great forerunner of the revival which followed, and did more to promote it than any other individual whatsoever; yea, more perhaps than the rest of the nation collectively taken." The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., (London: Paramore, 1792), p.7. Cf. Wesley, Works VI, 203f, VIII, 366, X,394f.

167. J.I,467, Works XI,367, L.IV,299. In the last reference Wesley says that he read both works in 1727, but the Serious Call was not published until 1729. His Diary shows that he read it in 1730. Cf. V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, p.311.

168. Coke and Moore's Life, pp.71f; V.H.H.Green, op.cit., pp.140,277. Green on the basis of the Diary begins the bibliographical list of religious works read by Wesley in 1732 with "Thomas à Kempis, Ephrem Syrus, William Law, Theologica Germanica." Overton also records that Law commended the reading of Tauler, à Kempis and especially, Macarius, op.cit., pp.76,146. For the correspondence, Wesley L.1,161ff and in regard to Georgia, J. Brazier Green, op.cit., pp.59f.

standing of the love of God.[169]

In the next chapter it will be necessary to examine Wesley's despairing criticism of his mentor and the ensuing correspondence of 1738. The purpose here is to review Law's conception of the nature and design of Christianity and to give reasons both for Wesley's initial attraction to Law's teaching, and for some of his hesitations.[170]

True religion for William Law was "the life of God in the soul of man." The first chapter-heading of the treatise on Perfection echoes the understanding and intention of Scougal and the Platonists:

> The nature and design of Christianity, that its sole end is to deliver us from the misery and disorder of this present state, and to raise us to a blissful enjoyment of the divine nature.[171]

---

169. L.1,239,219.

170. "But meeting now with Mr. Law's Christian Perfection and Serious Call, although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God...And by my continued endeavour to keep His whole law, inward and outward, to the utmost of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation." J.I,467 cf. Works VIII,366,X,394. These remarks were made sometime after Wesley's initial confrontation with Law. It is possible that they were colored by the break between the two men, and also by Wesley's concern for Law's developing mysticism.

171. The quotations from Christian Perfection are taken from the Second Edition (London: Innys, 1728), p.14. Wesley took the title for his own short abridgement of 1740 from this heading, The Nature and Design of Christianity. The Wesley edition used for purposes of collation was the Eighth (Bristol: Pine, 1765). This volume consisted of an abridgement of the first two chapters of Law's work combined as one chapter. (Robert Green's note, Bibliography No.17 is in error. He wrote, "This is an abridgement of the first chapter of Law's Practical Treatise..., and is therefore an instalment of the abridgement of the entire work published by Wesley in 1743 (No.45). The larger edition included a section (XXIII,p.13) which the earlier edition omitted and there are other minor changes. That is, Wesley did not simply incorporate the early instalment into the larger volume). Wesley's edition of the complete work used was the First Edition (Newcastle on Tyne: Gooding,1743). In both editions Wesley omitted Law's introduction in which he defined his understanding of perfection.

The critic of Locke and the defender of orthodoxy against Tindal affirms that the revelation of God's design is Christological and therefore is over against any natural knowledge of God or indeed of the nature of man:

> It has pleased the infinite goodness of God, to satisfy all our wants and enquiries by a revelation made to the world by his Son Jesus Christ. This revelation has laid open the great secret of providence from the creation of the world, explained the present state of things, and given man all the information that is necessary to quiet his anxieties, content him with his condition, and lead him safely to everlasting rest and happiness... As happiness is the sole end of all our labours, so this divine revelation aims at nothing else. It gives us right and satisfactory notions of ourselves... Before this, man was a mere riddle to himself, and his condition full of darkness and perplexity. [172]

The whole creation subsists in Christ as the Mediator who will restore or redeem all things.[173] So the precepts of the Gospel are

---

172. Ibid. p.14. In his 1740 edition Wesley changed the wording to read: "given man all the information that is necessary, both to give him rest here, and to lead him safely to everlasting happiness." (my underlining). The Nature and Design of Christianity,p.2. There are a number of places where Wesley changes the text to express a realized rather than simply a future hope.
For Law's criticisms of Locke and Tindal, Overton, op.cit., pp.328f, chapter VIII passim Overton attempted to show that Law's reaction to the claims of human reason were as sharp and final as that of a Luther. But granted the priority of revelation, there is much in Law which affirms a "reasonable religion." One has only to read the first chapter of the Serious Call and note the number of times in which there is an appeal to right reason. He could in fact write, "As true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by right reason, so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life." Serious Call, Twentieth Edition (Romsey: Sharp,1816),p.288. Wesley retained this sentence in his edition of the Serious Call (1744),Robert Green,Bibliography,No.48. The Wesley edition used is the Philadelphia Ed.,1803,p.156. (C.F.also Sermon CXVII,297).

173. "As all things were at first created by the Son of God, and without him was not anything made that was made, so are all things again restored and redeemed by the same divine Person." Christian Perfection,p.18. "He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things. The whole creation subsists in him and by him; nothing is in any order, nor any person in any favor with God, but by this great Mediator." Ibid.,p.22.

based upon these truths, "the deplorable corruption of human nature, and its new birth in Christ Jesus."[174] His admonition at the end of the first chapter follows from these presuppositions:

> Do but therefore know thyself, as religion has made thee known, do but see thyself in the light, which Christ has brought into the world, and then thou wilt see that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlasting spirit that is going to God; and that there are no enjoyments here that are worth a thought, but such as may make thee more perfect in those holy tempers which will carry thee to heaven. [175]

William Law is clear that if depraved man is to begin a life of holiness there must be a conversion, "a change of nature, a new life perfectly devoted to God."[176] He employs a doctrine of the two kingdoms and his constant posing of dualisms heightens his renunciation of the world:

> Our blessed Saviour came into the world not to make any composition with it, or to divide things between heaven and earth, but to make war with every state of life,

---

174. Ibid. p.19. Cf. "There are no truths of Christianity more plainly delivered in the Scriptures, or more universally acknowledged by all Christians, than these two, viz. the general corruption of human nature, and the absolute necessity of divine grace." p.246.

175. Ibid. p.40. Wesley changed the last clause to read, "but such as may adorn thee with that holiness without which no man may see the Lord." Nature and Design, p.10. Law's quotation is important as it provides the source for an important image in Wesley's understanding of the teleological character of the Christian life. Cf. "I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God...I want to know one thing,-the way to heaven." The Preface to the first volume of the Sermons (1746) Works V,3. He also uses the phrase, "I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air." Idem. That image is also taken from Law, p.40. Cf. Wesley Works V,427 (Sugden S.S. 11,29) also VIII, 18.

176. Ibid. p.41 (chapter heading).

> to put an end to the designs of flesh and blood, and to show us, that we must either leave this world, to become sons of God, or by enjoying it, take our portion amongst the devils and damned spirits. [177]

The Christian life then is a course of "holy discipline." The new birth entails the overcoming of the world, a freedom from sin and a love for all mankind.[178]

With his seventeenth century predecessors, and with the mystics generally, Law conceived of the religious life as being a restoration to an original perfection. The nature of religion has to do with the end of religion:

> This is the sole end of Christianity, to lead us from all thoughts of rest and repose here, to separate us from the world and worldly tempers... and unite us to God, the true fountain of all good. This is the mighty change which Christianity aims at, to put us into a new state, reform our whole natures, purify our souls, and make them the inhabitants of heavenly and immortal bodies. [179]

---

177. Ibid. pp.41-42. Again Wesley's change is significant, "and to show us, we must either renounce the world to become sons of God, or by enjoying it to take our portion among damned spirits. Nature and Design, p.10 (my underlining).

178. Ibid. pp.48-53. "We must like Him, have a universal love and tenderness for all mankind, imitating that love, which would that all men should be saved." p.52. Wesley, verbatim, p.12. Overton commented, "Calvinism in every shape and form was an abomination in the eyes of Law." op.cit., p.385.

179. Ibid. p.18. Wesley omitted this paragraph, perhaps because he found it repetitive, or because of its otherworldliness. It is apparent that both John and Charles sometimes failed to recognize Law's intention. They disagreed, for example, with his seeming depreciation of public worship: "It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the gospel for public worship; and perhaps it is a duty that is least insisted upon in scripture of any other: the frequent attendance at it, is never so much as mentioned in all the New Testament; whereas that religion or devotion, which is to govern ordinary actions of our life, is to be found in almost every verse of scripture." "Serious Call pp.6-7, cf.p.9. Wesley excised this paragraph from his edition. Cf. p.6. For Charles Wesley's reaction, Overton, op.cit., p.115.

So the Christian way is the way of perfection. This perfection is not a state so much as it is a proceeding under grace according to the design of Christ's life and sacrifice. In the world it is a striving rather than an attaining. It is not absolute or angelic perfection. In his exposition of 1 John 3:9, he wrote:

> This is not to be understood, as if he that was born of God, was therefore in an absolute state of perfection, and incapable afterwards of falling into anything that was sinful. It only means, that he that is born of God, is possessed of a temper and principle, that makes him utterly hate and labour to avoid all sin; he is therefore said to "not to commit sin," in such a sense as a man may be said not to do that, which it is his constant care and principle to prevent being done...This is our true standard and measure by which we are to judge of ourselves; we are not true Christians unless we are born of God, and we are not born of God, unless it can be said of us in this sense that we cannot commit sin. [180]

The perfect design, already realized in the life and sacrifice of Christ will begin to be realized in the believer who wills to imitate this life. Law devotes the second to last chapter to an expansion of this theme and argues that if the end of true religion is communion with God through Christ, an imitation of his life and example is necessary to final salvation. The following passage from this chapter shows how Law's prior decision as to the nature and end of religion governs his conclusion:

---

180. Ibid. p. 49. Wesley excised these words.
Cf. "The question is not whether Gospel perfection can be fully attained, but whether you come as near to it as a sincere intention and careful diligence can carry you." Serious Call, p.25. Also, "We cannot offer to God the service of angels; we cannot obey him as men in a state of perfection could; but fallen men can do their best, and this is the perfection that is required of us: it is only the perfection of our best endeavours, a careful labour to be as perfect as we can. Serious Call, p. 27. Wesley included the first passage, but omitted the second in his edition of the Serious Call, pp. 17-18.

> We need not look for particular texts of scripture, which command us to imitate the life of Christ, because we are taught by a stronger and more convincing authority; because as the end and design of our religion is to make us one with Christ hereafter, partakers of that same state of life, so it plainly calls us to be one with him here, and to be partakers of that same spirit and temper in which he lived on earth... This is an imitation of Jesus Christ, which is as necessary to salvation, as it is necessary to believe in his Name. [181]

Although Law assumed a Christological ground and insisted upon the necessity of grace for the new birth and the perfect life, these works do not develop a soteriology which speaks of forgiveness and assurance of faith. This is not to say that Law has no doctrine of the atonement, but it raises a question as to its adequacy. The sixth chapter of Christian Perfection begins with a statement on the foundation of the Christian Religion:

> Christianity is a doctrine of the cross, that teaches the restoration of mankind to the favour of God by the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. [182]

But the immediate conclusion drawn by Law is:

> This being the foundation of the Christian religion, it shows us, that all persons who will act conformably to the nature and reason of Christianity must make themselves sufferers for sin. [183]

Such an application means that Law's doctrine of the atonement has characteristics of both the "sacrificial" and "Moral influence" theories,[184] but, on the meaning of the cross for the

---

181. Christian Perfection, pp.459-460. Wesley excised this section in the 1743 Edition, cf.p.87.

182. Ibid. p.162.

183. Idem. Cf. "Our redemption is a redemption by sacrifice, and none are redeemed, but they who conform to it." Ibid. pp.61-62.

184. Cf. "To have a true idea of Christianity, we must not consider our Blessed Lord as suffering in our stead, but as our representative, acting in our name, and with such particular merit, as to make our joining with him acceptable unto God. He suffered, and was a sacrifice, to make our sufferings and sacrifice of ourselves fit to be received by God. And we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, to rise with Christ; or else his crucifixion, death, and resurrection will profit us nothing." Serious Call, p.266.

sinner confronted by the impossibility of the divine imperative, there is no mention. Related to this is the fact that there is no exposition of the nature of faith and no necessary distinction between justification and the new birth. Faith alone, in the death of Christ as the all-sufficing sacrifice, is not affirmed for reasons which were common to seventeenth-century Anglicanism. Law's reluctance to affirm the fiduciary nature of faith is apparent when he discusses the antinomian possibilities in the words of the communion liturgy which refer to Christ's one oblation making "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." He acknowledges that Christ's deed was sufficient and unrepeatable. But the fullness of sacrifice has not taken away the necessity of the believer's taking up his cross daily; neither does Christ's being our holiness mean that we should not endeavour to be holy.[185] Law summarizes his argument:

> For if there was any real atonement in the sufferings of Christ, if his sufferings rendered God propitious and reconciled to sinners, it isundeniable, that all who suffer with the same spirit that Christ suffered, must in their degree recommend themselves to the favour of God, on the same account, and for the same reasons that the sufferings of Christ procured peace and reconciliation.[186]

In order to arrest the antinomian implications of a fiduciary understanding of faith, Law was simply echoing the divines of the preceding century. He shared their concern but at the similar expense of an inadequate soteriology.

It may be replied, of course, that William Law was writing

---

185. Christian Perfection, pp.164-168.

186. Ibid. pp.170-171.

a "practical treatise" and a "serious call" for the convinced Christian and therefore spoke only of sanctification. It is true that in these two works he was concerned to stress asceticism as the way of perfection rather than develop the means by which sinful man comes to faith. Yet the reader is still left with the sharp dualisms, the absolute disjunction between nature and grace. He is also left with Law's assertion that perfection is the following of the universally valid laws of Christ:

> Jesus Christ is our only Law-giver, and his laws are to be complied with as the certain terms of our salvation. [187]

On these terms the imitation of Christ would seem to yield primarily to a legalistic interpretation.

Law's work had clearly provided Wesley with a further mandate for a life of holiness but it was a mandate under the law rather than the gospel.[188] J. Brazier Green's summary appears to be justified,

> Law drew Wesley yet farther forward in his quest, farther indeed than he had ever yet advanced. He summoned him to take up the Cross, to follow the example of Jesus Christ to live and serve in the world of men, to pray and to cultivate the life of the soul as he had never yet prayed, but there is no offer of new life by redemption, no call for the faith which saves. It is always an offer of new life by example, by effort, that is, by good works. [189]

This was at once the greatness and weakness of the witness of William Law. For all the truth contained in his description of God's restorative design, there remained a discontinuity between his account of the way of perfection and the cry of a soul in need of the assurance of redemption.

---

187. Ibid. p. 193.
188. Cf. Overton's criticism of the Serious Call, op.cit. pp.115-117.
189. John Wesley and William Law, p. 48.

SOME REFLECTIONS

With the name of William Law the consideration of several of the literary influences upon the development of John Wesley's thought must be drawn to a close. If one glances at the extensive bibliography of his Oxford and Georgia periods, it will be apparent that only a small number of works have been discussed here. The subject could be expanded, not only by the addition of more names and reviews, but also by a recapitulation of large tracts of the history of Christian thought in which Wesley became absorbed. Since such a project would take on proportions far beyond the scope of this work it became necessary to choose those sources which, for proposed reasons, proved most important. Some works were, in themselves, of intrinsic value to him. Others were representative of certain perspectives within the Christian heritage. Some provided accounts of methodology and doctrine, others were classics of devotion.

While acknowledging the particular intention of each work, certain questions were brought to these sources. These questions related to the understanding of the way in which the knowledge of God's design for man and, consequently, of the nature of the religious life, were construed. In answer, some confluence of thought has emerged. Before attempting to describe this, however, two general comments may be made in regard to the literature as a whole.

Firstly, there is an interconnectedness between the majority of these authors which could be regarded as a literary succession. William Law advised the reading of Macarius, à Kempis and the mystic writers. John Norris was closely affiliated with the Cambridge Platonists. Henry Scougal was also indebted to that group and

esteemed the Imitatio Christi and the Theologica Germanica. The Cambridge men, along with Jeremy Taylor, not only represented the main stream of Anglican piety but also the tendency to move behind the immediate theological controversies in order to recover the witness of the primitive Church, particularly in its Eastern form. One would expect, and in fact finds, significant agreements, both in regard to the order and content of thought. Hence it is possible to speak of a cumulative effect of this reading upon the mind of the young Wesley.

Secondly, Wesley's own selection and response was made from within the Anglican tradition. Many years later, in 1777, on the occasion of the laying of the foundation of the New Chapel, Wesley reviewed the history of Methodism and, in particular, its problematic relationship with the established Church. Speaking of his own formative period, he remarked:

> The Methodists at Oxford were all one body, and, as it were, one soul; zealous for the religion of the Bible, of the primitive Church, and, in consequence, of the Church of England; as they believed it to come nearer the scriptural and primitive plan than any other national Church upon earth. (Works VII, 429).

This Anglican factor, while not having a completely levelling effect upon Wesley's reception nevertheless informed his judgment.[190] His developing sense of a scriptural principle will be considered in the next chapter but it has already been seen that his churchmanship provided criteria by means of which he questioned anything which

---

190. Cf. the comment of Alexander Knox, who claimed that Wesley's theology contained the "very spirit of Macarius and Chrysostom, of Smith and Cudworth, of de Sales and Fenelon, simplified, systematized, rationalized, evangelized." Remains III, 138.

cut across his understanding of the Church's faith and practice. This was found to be particularly true in his criticism of the mystic writers.

The alleged confluence of thought, which may be supported by these empirical observations, does not, of course, amount to identity. However, without importing arbitrary structures, some marks of commonality are evident. These will be viewed particularly in the light of Wesley's immediate background which was described in the first part of this work.

Each writer was concerned to describe the nature and design of the Christian life in teleological terms. There was a common sense of pattern or order of salvation based upon a linear progression from the creation-fall to the consummation. Whether this design was conceived cosmologically or historically, whether it was grounded upon a monistic metaphysic or upon a scriptural principle, or some combination of both, there was general agreement that the nature of the telos was perfect love. The religious epistemology was generally mystical. It could take the form of platonic idealism or the language of the ascent of the soul to perfect union. According to the Anglican representatives, the divine design was received as revelation, comprehended by right reason and accepted by a faith which, acknowledging its gracious reality, came to expression in love. For some writers, the telos as hope could be realized in the midst of existence, while for others, its perfection, although anticipated, would await the absence of the world.

The primacy of the love of God was the sine qua non of these writers. Whether their soteriology was based primarily upon a

necessary order of things derived from a view of the divine perfections, or upon the redemptive design realized in and through Christ, salvation was thought of as the restoration of man to the primal union in the divine love. The phrases, "the renewal of the image," "the initial state," "original perfection," all describe the end as it was in the beginning.

Sometimes it appeared that this teleology was so strongly assumed that, paradoxically, it became partial. The concept of design, union or deiformity, could be so presupposed that the means of faith and love could be absorbed into one all-encompassing reality. Aharon Lichtenstein, in writing of Henry More and his fellow Platonists has remarked:

> Where an Augustine, for instance - influenced by both Neoplatonic idealism and the shattering experience of personal sin - is fired by the yearning for both deiformity and saving grace, the Cambridge men, with their emphasis upon ethical reflection, are relatively oblivious to the latter...They intimate that there is little need for applying oneself directly to the task of seeking divine favor; if one only lives properly, it can be trusted to follow - it will, it is often suggested, ipso facto have been achieved. "It is a more difficult work to reconcile men to God; than to reconcile God to men," and it is with the reconciliation and restoration of men that the Platonists were principally concerned. [191]

Norris and Law wrote at a time when theology and morality were in danger of being completely construed within the framework of a reasonable Weltanschauung, a view of "the fitness of all

---

191. Henry More, The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist, p. 185. The quotation within the paragraph is from Whichcote, Aphorisms, no.398. I am indebted to Lichtenstein's discussion in this chapter,"From Religion to Moralism" (chap.IV).

things."[192] They attempted, in the name of revelation, to disclaim such a monism. Law, in particular, sought to rehearse the discontinuity between the old man under sin and the new man in Christ. But generally this question of discontinuity received little attention in the works which have been considered. The focus rather was upon the possibility of continuity, of holy living, of the union of the soul with God.

Another instance of partialness has to do with the relation between Christology and the nature of faith. Here a note of caution should be sounded. Our attention has centered upon a small selection of the work of most of the authors and any judgment is limited to this selection. In these volumes, however, it can be said that the doctrines of the person and work of Christ are not major concerns. The form in which faith had been cast by medieval thinking and also by the seventeenth-century reaction to Calvinism, led the Platonists, Taylor, Norris and Law to hesitate before the Reformers' stress upon the fiduciary character of faith and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer.

---

192. The phrase is from Law's summary of Tindal's argument in Christianity as old as Creation in his own reply, The Case of Reason (1731). Cf. Overton, William Law, Chapter VIII, especially pp.121f.
In his work, An Account of Reason and Faith, John Norris had written that those who cavil at revelation do so because of the fact "that either they think too meanly of God, or too highly of themselves; that either they ascribe something Human to his Nature,or something Divine to their own;...in one word, that either they Humanize God, or Deify themselves and their own Rational Abilities" (13th ed. London, 1728), pp.7-8. Cited by Lichtenstein, op. cit. p.176, n.48.

Historically, this reaction which was found to be prevalent among the Latitudinarians, was understandable. However, it limited the proclamation of the living presence of Christ and muted the notes of forgiveness and assurance. The doctrine of justification by faith in the merits of Christ's death was seldom mentioned. Faith usually remained an assent either to the perfections of God or to the redemptive event as completed in Christ. He was the pattern of restoration now because he had been Saviour. By an identification with his life of suffering-love, the Christian would be enabled, by grace, to live according to the divine intention. True, the fact of redemption had been safe-guarded against a merely exemplarist interpretation.[193] Scougal and Norris had stated the orthodox doctrine of the cross and William Law, in his turn, had realistically reduced the force of a literal mimesis. Yet the impression is given that the work of the Mediator was revelatory chiefly in a paradigmatic sense, and that this had to do with the sanctification of the believer.

Although the connection between an imitatio Christi and the benefits of the atonement are not always clear, all writers claimed the absolute necessity of divine grace. Sometimes this was the gratia infusa which informed the mystic way (and elements of mysticism are diffused through all these works). Usually, however, it was sacramental grace and that grace which was received through

---

193. For a discussion of the relation between the imitation of Christ and the prior fact of redemption, E. J. Tinsley, The Imitation of God in Christ (London: SCM, 1960), chap. 11.

those means which God ordained for his Church.[194]

In these works the concentration, as has been mentioned, was upon the sanctification of the believer. This major interest could entail another example of partialness. Faith in the divine loving could become identified with the believer's love for God and for the neighbor. In other words, there could be a subtle shift toward thinking that morality, especially when characterized as altruism, was religion itself. The alternatives facing the eighteenth century were an enthusiasm which had to be countered by "right reason," and an antinomianism which was to be answered on the basis of a rationalist moral a priori. The pilgrimage from nature to grace could become a matter for the will. A point had been reached where a partialness in teleological thinking could issue in a morality which was not necessarily connected with a living faith.

Quite early in his ministry John Wesley had resisted elements in the casuistry of Jeremy Taylor and later he had questioned the austerity of Law's concept of Christian duty.[195] This may be regarded merely as some youthful reaction and to suggest that he was criticizing the ground of their moral theology, rather than particular rules, is probably to read too much back into this early period. But it can be claimed that in spite of the cumulative wealth bequeathed through these sources there were strong reasons for his discontent, bewilderment and despairing criticisms during the

---

194. Cf. Emil Brunner's criticisms of the mystics' doctrine of grace, The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth, 1934), pp.291ff; also Paul Lehmann's critique of Moral Theology with references to the Caroline divines, Ethics in a Christian Context (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp.322ff.

195. Letters I, 19,21-22. On his reaction to Law, Robert Southey, The Life of Wesley, Second Am. Edn. (New York: Harper, 1847), I, 88, Overton, William Law, p. 80.

thirties.

According to Wesley, the major outcome of this reading was a changed disposition and a total orientation toward the divine perfection of love. He was not uncritical of his sources even as he read them. Further, his developing sense of the priority of scriptural revelation would amend or qualify some of their teaching. Yet the belief that the true end of the Christian life was that love and holiness which belonged to man's initial state would be preserved throughout his ministry. It is important to recognize that the immediate context of his doctrine of perfection was the theology of design which he had learned, not only from the oft-mentioned triumvirate, à Kempis, Taylor and Law, but also from the ancient and more recent platonic and mystic sources which were part of the larger heritage of Christian thought. He accepted their ordo salutis, he accepted their goal. The means of the perfect life and its possibility within human existence were matters upon which he would spend years. The point which should be underlined is this: for one who had so immersed himself in this tradition, a formulation of the doctrine of perfection was inevitable.

In 1765, Wesley wrote a letter to John Newton in which he reviewed the history of his thought on perfection. He rehearsed his indebtedness to the triumvirate and told of his resolutions "to give God all my heart," and to be "all devoted to God in body, soul and spirit." This, he reminded Newton, was what he had always meant by the idea of perfection. There is a further detail in this letter which may well provide a transition to the next section of this work which will deal with the content of Wesley's own

theological expression in his early period. Having referred to some further examples of his preoccupation with "perfection" he wrote the following detail:

> In 1735 I preached my farewell sermon at Epworth, in Lincolnshire. In this likewise I spoke with the utmost clearness of having "one design, one desire, one love," and of pursuing the "one end" of our life in all our words and actions. [196]

Perhaps those few words which indicate a theological context and a certain content may be taken as a concise statement of the influence of the sources which have now been considered.

---

196. Letters IV, 299. It should be remembered that A Plain Account of Christian Perfection has the subtitle, "As believed and taught by the Reverend John Wesley, from the year 1725, to the year 1777 (My underlining). Works XI, 366, cf. p.444.

PART II

CHAPTER TWO

THE EXPRESSION OF JOHN WESLEY'S EARLY THEOLOGY

Introduction

This study began with the conviction that the theology of John Wesley cannot be understood apart from the immediate background of seventeenth-century Anglicanism. Some aspects of this religious history have been examined along with the major emphases which emerged from Wesley's reading in divinity. At the end of the seventeenth century, the doctrinal defense against Rome had lost most of its urgency and Puritanism had ceased to be a power in the land. Following the deliberate correlationist endeavors of the virtuosi and under the impressive influence of John Locke, the view now prevailed that the task of theology could be done within the framework of a new liberalism and idealism. Even moral theologians were no longer dependent upon authoritarian sanctions. An ontology was available which could inform all relations. Reasonable men could attend to the "nature of things" without the direction of revelation and, indeed, without the assistance of the Church. The Deists were subjecting the historic foundations to rigorous self-examination and traditional orthodoxy was well-nigh exhausted. There were those, of course, who would not surrender to deism, moralism or secularism and who attempted to retrieve the particularity of the Gospel from the general confusion. Their defense, however, was hardly compelling.

John Norris, himself a profound scholar, engaged in a penetrating dialogue with Locke's empiricism and upheld the unique character of revelation. William Law challenged the rationalism of Tindal and the general usurpation by natural religion. In spite of such heroic response, however, it is apparent that the orthodox were being forced to fight on their opponents' ground. To be particular, the point at which the challenge could have been met was the point on which the rear-guard theologians were least explicit - on the meaning of Christ for faith. In any case, their protests were extraneous to those who had given themselves to free-thinking, to others who had taken refuge in the sacerdotal life of the Church, and to those who contented themselves with some form of broad-churchmanship.

It is time now to turn to Wesley's own thought in his formative period. In many respects it will be found to repeat or corroborate structures and motifs which have already been heard. It will also be seen that some of his formulations reflect the crucial problems with which contemporary churchmen were wrestling. For John Wesley was also concerned to define "the nature and design of Christianity." He had absorbed the theological patterns of the preceding century and had listened to the current debates. Yet, as will be shown, his theology does not yield to rationalism and it does not perpetuate a benign latitudinarianism. Two radical decisions, one of them methodological, the other material, seriously qualified the theological position which he had inherited.

Wesley was a student at a time when the pendulum which sweeps across the history of Christian thought was pointing to a confidence in reason. If revelation was to be invoked it still must subscribe

to the reasonableness of religion. Wesley's first decision had to do with this problem. He decided that the foundation of the theological enterprise was the absolute authority of scriptural revelation. An examination of this decision will be the subject of the first section of this chapter. Then Wesley's preaching during this period will be analysed and the main themes noted. The purpose here will be to see to what extent Wesley upholds the theology of design which proved to be the consensus of seventeenth-century Anglicanism and which had been supported by his reading.

It becomes apparent, however, from a reading of Wesley's Journal and Letters that he was not satisfied with the substance of his preaching. A personal disquiet gave rise to reflections on his despair. It was this discontent which led him to the second major decision in these years. This concerned the very nature of faith itself. Wesley's discovery, at this point, was such that he could only describe it as "a new doctrine."

The chief question to be addressed to this material can be stated simply. In what way was the seventeenth-century formulation of the nature and design of religion affected by these two decisions as to the authority of scripture and the meaning of faith?

One other preliminary word may be necessary. The history of Wesley's discovery which culminated in 1738 is a story full of biographical details. His youthful confidence, which has already been noted especially in his correspondence with his mother, gave way to ambivalence. This, in turn, issued in bewilderment and a despair of his ministry. The temptation to ponder Wesley's reflections in an attempt to psychologize his anxieties and frus-

trations will be avoided here. Granted the legitimacy of such an enquiry, it is not germane to the purpose of this work. It may also be added that although Wesley provided lucid accounts of his despair and joy, he did not dwell upon his conflicts or his recoveries. In a word, he did not linger at Aldersgate. He often recalled his time at Oxford and in Georgia, but he seldom referred back to the event of his liberation. Rather he was ever bent on proclaiming the grace which had made faith a means of forgiveness and assurance. He was obsessed and impelled with the urgency of preaching. As important as the role of experience was in his thought, it is this sense of urgency which gives life and haste to his Journals and this had, above all, to do with the priority of the Gospel.

A. THE SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE

John Wesley had been instructed "to love and revere the Scripture" since his childhood (W.XIII,272). His mother not only taught the Bible to her family as a means of devotion but also used it as an educational resource for learning the alphabet, spelling and reading (J.111,36f). In 1704 she wrote to her son, Samuel, at Westminster,

> Besides the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has already given us the Holy Scripture, which is a perfect rule of faith and manners: this read and study constantly, and in all cases that occur, when you want direction have recourse to the law and the testimony. [1]

---

1. Stevenson, Memorials, p. 181.

If Susannah's advice was eminently practical, her husband emphasized the prior requirement of critical learning and the mastering of those disciplines necessary for the expository task. Among his writings were a History of the Old and New Testaments (1701) and a Life of Christ (1693), both in verse. The work upon which he spent most effort was his Librum Jobi which was published after his death, in 1736.[2] Samuel was proud of the linguistic attainments of his sons. He had hoped to compile a new Polyglot Bible using Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Chaldee, Syriac and Arabic and he enlisted their assistance in this project.[3]

At Oxford, John Wesley, followed his father's advice and read Annotationes in Novum Testamentum by Hugo Grotius and this work continued to be used by the members of the Holy Club. So he became acquainted with the method of philological criticism and with the procedures necessary for the establishing of the

---

2. Dissertationes in Librum Jobi. (London, 1736). There is a copy of this amazing work of 599 folio pages, beautifully printed in Latin, in the Drew Library. It consists of fifty-three Dissertations which deal with a whole range of connected subjects including the problem of authorship, Homeric parallels, the origin of evil, Zoroastrian dualisms, recent methods of scriptural interpretation and an analysis of the faith of Job. Following these dissertations there is a further section in which the Hebraic text is collated, verse by verse, with the Chaldee, Arabic, Syriac and other extant texts and compared with Greek and Latin variants, as well as William Tindal and other English versions. John Wesley presented the first copy to the Queen two days prior to his leaving for Georgia (L.I,192). For some further details, Stevenson, op.cit., pp.118f.

3. The work did not materialize. For Samuel's description of the technical requirements for the project, see his letters to John and Charles, Stevenson, op.cit., pp.120,128,130. These show clearly what the father meant by "critical learning."

biblical text.[4] According to Coke and More's biography, the Greek New Testament was as familiar to him as the Authorized Version, and at the University he was commonly known as the Graecian.[5] At the age of twenty three, his ability in biblical and theological studies was recognized when he was appointed Greek lecturer and moderator of the classes at Lincoln College.[6]

Enough has been said to indicate Wesley's intensive training in the disciplines of biblical scholarship. The next question concerns his understanding of biblical authority. In the preceding chapter it was shown how Wesley's parents were able to accept, as complementary, the claims of reason and revelation. John himself, especially in his early criticism of some of the works which he was reading, also showed his sympathy toward the modern premises. However, he read and obviously took note of those who sought to conserve the absolute priority of scriptural revelation. His search for authority during these years at Oxford is typical of his responsible reaction to confusion on the one hand and indifference on the other. It can be seen that his own attitude

---

4. L.I,48. Jeremy Taylor had referred to the "incomparable Hugo Grotius," in his "Further Explication of the Doctrine of Original Sin," Works, VII,330. Cf. "La Methode theologique de Hugo Grotius," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses, Vol.32,1952,pp.126-133, especially p.128 note 12. On the influence of Grotius in England, W.S.M.Knight, The Life and Works of Hugo Grotius (Grotius Society Publications, iv (London, 1925).

5. The Life of the Reverend John Wesley, M.A., (London: Paramore, 1792),p.42. Cf. also Moore, Life,II,415 and Tyerman, Life and Times, III,656.

6. Overton explained that this lectureship did not mean simply the teaching of Greek, but rather the general religious education of the undergraduates. "The lecture was to be on the original language, but the real object was to teach divinity, not Greek." John Wesley, (Boston: Houghton,1891),p.20.

toward theological enquiry underwent a change between 1725 and 1729,[7] and several important passages which trace this development will now be considered.

About 1728 Wesley prepared a sermon on the verse, "We are not as many, who corrupt the Word of God: But as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ. (II Corinthians 2:17)." (S.136, W.VII, 468-473). It is a concise and zealous plea for biblical integrity and moral sincerity in preaching and in practice. Wesley asserts that a preacher corrupts the Word of God when he introduces "human mixtures" - either the errors of others or the fancies of his own mind. (470) He does this also by false interpretations which fail to realize the biblical writer's intention or context. Thirdly, he corrupts the Word when he reduces the force of the biblical message in order to palliate his hearers. Over against such forms of corruption, Wesley affirms that the first mark of sincerity is for preachers to remember that "it is not their own word they preach, but the word of Him that sent them." (471) Speaking of such preachers, he writes:

> You have the gospel from them, if in a less elegant manner, yet fair, and as it is; without any mixture of errors to pollute it, or misinterpretation to perplex it; explained in the most natural, obvious manner, by what precedes and what follows the place in question;

---

7. Wesley wrote a sermon, in 1725, on the text, Matthew 6:33 which was never published in the Works. In his exposition of the verse, he said, "We are expressly commanded to seek his Righteousness, as well as his Kingdom: which word... yet implies here, as in many other places of Holy Scripture the sum of the Christian Religion. Whatever virtues are recommended to us by Reason, especially as assisted by Revelation...are here included in this word Righteousness." From a facsimile copy in the Drew Library, p.6. For a note on this sermon, see the appendix to the following section, p. 186.
Cf. also Sermon 135, "On Mourning for the Dead" (1726), where reason and revelation constitute a dual authority, Works, VII, 465,467.

> and commented upon by the most sure way, the least liable to mistake or corruption, the producing of those parallel places that express the same thing the more plainly.(472)

The sincere preacher neither adds or subtracts for "there is nothing superfluous in it, relating either to faith or practice; and therefore they preach all parts of it."(472) Finally there is to be no palliation. The hearers must accommodate themselves to the Word, the Word is not, in this sense, to be accommodated to the hearers. The sermon concludes with Wesley's enunciation of the purpose of preaching. His words echo the intention of Anglican piety and are familiar,.

> Our first intention in speaking, is to point him the way to happiness, and to disengage him from the great road that leads to misery.(473)

There is no development of the Christological implications of the text but this sermon is, at least, a preliminary statement of the priority of the Word of God in preaching and it prepares the reader for the next stage of Wesley's development on this point.

In the year 1729 Wesley began to study the Bible "as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion." (W.XI,367,5) The following year is connected with one of his best-known sayings,

> In 1730 I began to be <u>homo unius libri</u>, to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. (L.IV,299)

The members of the Holy Club - the Bible-bigots and Bible-moths of popular ridicule - also adopted this position, appealing in

all things "to the law and to the testimony."[8]

In later years Wesley recounted the insights which came to him from this concentration. In his Plain Account of Christian Perfection he reflected that, at this stage of his development, he saw "the indispensable necessity of having 'the mind which was in Christ'." Religion was an inward and outward conformity to the "grand Exemplar." (W.XI,367,5)[9] The whole passage shows that his interpretation of scripture was confirming the piety which he had learned from à Kempis and Taylor. In the other version he provided the following statement of the result of his decision to be homo unius libri:

> I then saw in a stronger light than ever before that only one thing is needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness; and I groaned to love God with all my heart and to serve Him with all my strength. (L.IV,299)

---

8. L,I,132; S.107,i,I - Works,VII,203. Wesley's summary of the beliefs of the Holy Club in A Short History of Methodism reads, "They were all zealous members of the Church of England; not only tenacious of all her doctrines, so far as they knew them, but of all her discipline, to the minutest circumstance. They were likewise zealous observers of all the University Statutes, and that for conscience' sake. But they observed neither these nor anything else any further than they conceived it was bound upon them by their one book, the Bible; it being their one desire and design to be downright Bible-Christians; taking the Bible, as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their whole and sole rule." Works,VIII,348,6.

9. The passage reads: "In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study, the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having "the mind which was in Christ," and of "walking as Christ also walked;" even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in him, and of walking as he walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more, than of bending this rule to the experience of myself, or of other men; of allowing myself in any least disconformity to our grand Exemplar."

If Wesley was accurately describing his resultant intentions, it is possible to conclude that his scriptural principle had to do with sanctification, indeed with Christian perfection.[10] This thematic interpretation is further developed in a most interesting passage from his early sermon "On the Holy Spirit." Wesley, having referred to the Spirit as that light which enables the believer to discern human fallacies, to reject the irreligious maxims of the world and to practice trust in God and love toward man, goes on:

> The object which this light brings us most immediately to know is ourselves; and by the virtue of this, one that is born of God, and has a lively hope, may indeed see far into the ways of Providence, and farther yet into the Holy Scriptures; <u>for the Holy Scriptures</u>, excepting some accidental and less necessary parts, <u>are only a history of that new man which he himself is</u>; and Providence is only a wise disposal of events for the awakening of particular persons, and ripening the world in general for the coming of Christ's kingdom. (S.141,III - <u>W</u>.VII,515).[11]

There is no suggestion of the nature or need of justification in these descriptions. The principle of interpretation presupposes the stance of faith or belief, and is used to enunciate "the history of the new man." Wesley's decision as to the theme of the scriptures preceeded other doctrinal considerations. This is illustrated clearly in a lengthy passage inserted in the Journal under the date, January 24th, 1738. This reflection includes yet another general statement of what Wesley believed to be the theme of the scriptures:

> For many years I have been tossed by various winds of doctrine. I asked long ago, "What must I do to be saved?" The Scripture answered, Keep the commandments, believe, hope, love; follow after these tempers

---

10. Cf. <u>Works</u> XI,384,15 (6) where Wesley describes his "first conception" of Christian perfection.

11. My italics.

> till thou hast fully attained, that is till death; by all those outward works and means which God hath appointed, by walking as Christ walked.(J.1.418-419)

Wesley then proceeds to show that he was quite conscious of the Roman-Protestant dilemma as to the priority and relation of works and faith. He had valued faith, the means of grace and good works, not on their own account, but because they had been appointed by God "to bring me in due time to the mind that was in Christ." Having avoided the doctrine that works merit salvation, he read "some Lutheran and Calvinist authors, whose confused and indigested accounts magnified faith to such an amazing size that it quite hid all the rest of the commandments." Wesley's slight knowledge of the continental reformers is admitted, incidentally, when he confesses that he did not see that their reaction to "popery" lay behind this exaggeration. In any case he could not reconcile their position with either the Scriptures or common sense. It was the Anglican theologians, William Beveridge, Jeremy Taylor and Robert Nelson, who relieved him from those "well meaning, wrong-headed Germans." Generally their accounts of the nature of Christianity were consistent with both reason and Scripture, but they differed in their interpretation of Scripture and seemed to lack a sense of the unity of the Church. This latter point made by Wesley pertained to the issue in as much as he believed that the given unity of the Church established the reality and consistency of its authority. He remained unsuccessful in his attempt to relate the authority of scripture with the authority of the Church until "Providence" brought him to those who showed him a sure rule of interpretation: "Consensus veterum: quod ab omnibus, quod ubique, quod semper creditum." Yet these terms as laid down by Vincent of Lérins and

to which the Anglican theologians had so often appealed, meant that Wesley "bent the bow too far the other way."[12] He was tempted to make antiquity a coordinate with Scripture. After trying the Mystic writers, seemingly as a retreat from the academic puzzle he had set himself, Wesley finally came back, he knew not how, to what he called "the right way." (J.1.419-420)

This passage has been summarized at length because it shows Wesley making his way through the several options which were open to him as an interpreter. He does not here describe his solution but, from his resumé of the catholic-protestant alternatives and from his exposure of the mystics' teaching, it is apparent that the scriptural principle assumed belief and had to do with a life of holiness or perfection, for these were not distinct in his thought.

One further factor emerges, this time in connection with the events of May 1738, namely the correlation of scripture and experience. He had asked Peter Böhler to establish his case for the forgiveness and assurance of faith on the basis of scripture and experience. About his own quest he wrote:

> I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavoring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages, I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, 'that experience would never agree with the literal interpretation of those scriptures. Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witness of it.' (J.I,471-472)

---

12. Outler provides the full quotation from the Commonitorium, John Wesley, p.46, note 10. See also J.N.D.Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, pp.49f. For the problem which this formulation posed for the Reformers in that it raised the issue of the Church's having authority over Scripture, Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics 1/2, 550f.

Of course, Böhler produced the evidence, and to this we shall return.

Over the course of some thirteen years Wesley had developed as a biblical scholar and interpreter. In that time he had not only mastered the philological tools but had also set himself standards for handling the Word of God. His decision to be homo unius libri had to be tested by the ancient options but finally Wesley held to it indubitably. It has been seen also that he worked with a scriptural principle which held faith and love together as the marks of the Christian life but with an emphasis upon the achievement of holiness. This principle echoed a doctrinal position which had been characteristic of the Anglican theologians who sought to describe the nature of the Christian life almost exclusively in terms of sanctification. In Wesley's own words he had taken the Bible "as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own" for his sole rule. (W.VIII,348) In answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?", the first word of reply which Wesley heard from the Scriptures was, "Keep the commandments." (L.I,419) The scriptural principle, as he understood it at this stage, was a product of his theological thought rather than an initiating factor. As such it hardly allowed him to hear the sound of the Gospel.

B. THE INTENTION TO LOVE IN WESLEY'S EARLY PREACHING.

John Wesley's decision to regard the Scriptures as the controlling medium of divine authority is naturally reflected in his doctrinal formulations of the early period. An attempt will now be made to outline the content of this theology, chiefly

on the basis of sermons which he prepared prior to 1738.[13] In passing, it may be observed that these sermons have not received sufficient attention from Wesley scholars. In the desire to highlight the event of his so-called conversion in 1738, the significance of his earlier preaching has generally been minimized. Yet this is to draw too sharp a distinction between the substance of his theology before and after Aldersgate and it is to disregard the many allusions which the mature Wesley made to his early work.

The most substantial sermon belonging to this period was preached at St. Mary's, Oxford on the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ, 1733. (S.17 - W.V,202-212) There are good reasons for selecting the outline of this sermon as a basis for this present discussion. Although it was preached two years before his going to Georgia, it was a work which Wesley always regarded with some satisfaction and it is included among the Standard Sermons.[14]

Wesley introduced the sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart" (Romans 2:29), by referring to the contemporary situation in which men still profess to the Christian religion although they have "lived away" its substance. When a distinction is proposed between the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world, on the basis of the truth of the resurrection, the preacher is charged with strange new doctrines (1,202).[15] Natural man is alive unto

---

13. See the Appendix at the end of this section for a listing of the early sermons referred to.

14. Sugden,I,266-279. For a note on this sermon see the Appendix.

15. The citations refer to the section of the sermon and the page in the Works. Each new sermon discussed will be identified in full. On the distinction mentioned in this last sentence, cf. Sermon 127,ii - Works VII,367, "For there is an irreconcilable enmity between the Spirit of Christ, and the spirit of the world." It is again used in Wesley's description of his chief motive for going to Georgia, Letters I, 188.

the world, but he is dead unto God. Hence the words of the Spirit are foolishness to him for he lacks that "spiritual sense" by which he can know the wisdom and power of God. On the other hand, the mark of the true Christian is not circumcision or baptism or any other outward form but rather, "a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of Him that created it." This is the meaning of the text, a meaning apparent only to the spiritual discernment of faith (2,3, 202,203). The circumcision of the heart, according to Wesley's definition, is:

> that habitual disposition of soul, which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, "from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit;" and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus; the being so "renewed in the spirit of our mind," as to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect (i,I,203).

The exposition, thus far, illustrates that Wesley was following the pattern of thought which construed salvation as a restoration to an initial state of perfection which man knew before the Fall. Another Oxford sermon (1735) begins with a summary of this state:

> When God at first surveyed all the works he had made, "behold they were very good." All were perfect in beauty; and man, the lord of all, was perfect in holiness. And as his holiness was, so was his happiness (S.127,intro.-W.VII,365).[16]

---

16. Throughout Wesley's early writings, and indeed in his later work, he follows a customary procedure in combining holiness with happiness,cf. Letters I,92f,114,128; also Sermon 141,ii-Works VII,513.
Isaac Barrow had written, "Seeing we have mentioned happiness, or the Summum Bonum, the utmost scope of human desire, we do add, that piety doth surely confer it. Happiness, whatever it be, hath certainly an essential coherence with piety. These are reciprocal propositions, both of them infallibly true: He that is pious is happy, and he that is happy is pious." Anglicanism, p.754. Also, William Beveridge, Ecclesia Anglicana Ecclesia Catholica, The Thirty Nine Articles 3rd Edn.(Oxford,1847) p.274f. The usage was prominent in Scougal, Norris and Law. Cf.Martin Schmidt, John Wesley, pp.101,note 5,111f,308 notes 8,9. For an early definition of happiness in Wesley, Sermon 139,iii - Works VII,497-498.

When man sinned, the whole scene changed and man's spirit was "sick unto death." The world became "one great infirmary." (366)

A proper recognition of the dire meaning of the Fall is necessary for man's self-understanding and for the explication of his longing:

> If...he should be willing to find out the miseries of his fall, his understanding might furnish him with reasons for constant mourning, for despising and denying himself; might point out the sad effects of turning away from God and losing his Spirit, in the shame and anguish of a nature at variance with itself; thirsting after immortality, and yet subject to death; approving righteousness, and yet taking pleasure in things inconsistent with it; feeling an immense want of something to perfect and satisfy all its faculties, and yet neither able to know what that mighty thing is, otherwise than from its present defects, nor how to attain it, otherwise than by going contrary to its present inclinations. (S.141,i-W,VII,510)

Adam is naked in that God has departed from him. Although he still has his being from God, he lives a <u>servile</u> rather than a <u>filial</u> existence. Further he has now fallen under the "tutorage of the evil one." (510-511). He is dead in the midst of life.

Yet God wills to redeem. In his sermon "On the Holy Spirit," Wesley, in describing the role of the Mediator, showed that he was aware of the Christological options with which his fore-bears had wrestled. The Redeemer did not come simply to promulgate a new law, for the following of precepts does not necessarily entail communion with God. Nor is it enough for the Redeemer to be "the fountain of imputed righteousness." Here Wesley repeats the Anglican argument against the Calvinist doctrine. Such imputation, as a divine favor, would not cure or reconcile man in his corruption because it would not allow for "a communication of himself," as enabled by the Spirit. His explanation of the inadequacy of the imputative doctrine is:

> Though a man should be allowed to be righteous, and be exempt from all punishment, yet if he is as really enslaved to the corruptions of nature, as endued with these privileges of redemption, he can hardly make himself easy; and whatever favor he can receive from God, here or hereafter, without a communication from himself, it is neither the cure of a spirit fallen, nor the happiness of one reconciled. Must not then our Redeemer be one that "baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," - the Fountain and Restorer of that to mankind, whereby they are restored to their first estate, and the enjoyment of God? (512) [17]

There will be further illustrations of Wesley's resistance to a purely objective understanding of the atonement but before exploring this further, his orthodox understanding of the person of Christ should be mentioned. Christ is the Word of God bearing to man "all the communications of the Godhead which any creatures could receive" (512).[18] His birth declares the possibility of man's new birth, and his union with God represents the possibility of man's eternal communion (513-514).

Wesley's Christology merges immediately into soteriology, for,

> Christ is not only God above us; which may keep us in awe, but cannot save; but he is Immanuel, God with us, and in us. As he is the Son of God, God must be where he is; as he is the Son of man, he will be with mankind; the consequence of this is,

---

17. The restorative work is further described in language reminiscent of the Fathers, "To remedy this (the consequences of the Fall) the Word of God became man, that man by receiving the adoption might become a son of God once more; that the light of the Father might rest upon the flesh of our Lord, and come bright from thence unto us; and so man, being encompassed with the light of the Godhead, might be carried into immortality. When he was incarnate and became man, he recapitulated in himself all generations of mankind, making himself the center of salvation, that what we lost in Adam, even the image and likeness of God, we might receive in Christ Jesus." p.513.

18. Cf. Letters I, 90-91 where Wesley maintains the trinitarian doctrine, incidentally in opposition to Clarke and Tindal.

> that in the future age "the tabernacle of God will be with men," and he will show them his glory; and, at present, he will dwell in their hearts by faith in his Son (514). [19]

There is a strong pro me character evident in these formulations. Christ is known by his benefits, but his benefits are salvatory only when they have been appropriated in the life of the believer. In a quite penetrating review Wesley shows that he understood theologically the problems contained in both objective and subjective theories of the atonement. Speaking to the alternatives which had become clear in the preceeding century, he wrote:

> I think this age has made it particularly necessary to be well assured what Christ is to us: When that question is so differently resolved by the pious but weak accounts of some pretenders to faith on one hand, and by the clearer, but not perfectly Christian accounts of some pretenders to reason on the other: While some derive from him a "righteousness of God," but in a sense somewhat improper and figurative; and others, no more than a charter of pardon, and a system of morality: While some so interpret the gospel, as to place the holiness they are to be saved by in something divine, but exterior to themselves, and others, so as to place it in things really within themselves, but not more than human. Now the proper cure of what indistinctness there is one way, and what infidelity in the other, seems to be contained in the doctrine of my text: "The Lord is that Spirit." (509)

Wesley naturally assumed the "Western" position in the Filioque debate and affirmed that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ

---

19. Here Wesley was echoing an Anglican theme which featured prominently in the Cambridge Platonists. Cudworth, in his sermon to the House of Commons had said, "The great mystery of the gospel doth not lie only in Christ without us, (although we must also know what he hath done for us,) but the very pith and kernel of it consists in Christ inwardly formed in our hearts. Nothing is truly ours but what lives in our spirits. Salvation itself cannot save us as long as it is only without us...The gospel, though it be a sovereign and medicinal thing in itself, yet the mere knowing and believing the history of it will do us no good. We can receive no virtue from it till it be inwardly digested in our souls; till it be made ours, and become a living thing in our hearts." A Christian Library, IX, 392.

proceeding from the Son as from the Father. The Holy Spirit had left man at the Fall, but the incarnation, preaching and death of Christ "were designed to represent, proclaim, and purchase for us this gift." (509) The redeeming Christ, in the totality of his mediatorial office, is now with men through the Spirit.

Christ's atonement is a completed event. Man belongs to God by redemption, as well as by creation (S.17,i,7-W.V,205). That remains the objective truth. But the Holy Spirit, in words which Wesley took from William Tilly, is "the sign, the seal, and the security of our salvation." (S.138,iii,2-W.VII,492) That is the necessary addition to the objective doctrine. So, again following Tilly, it could be said of the Spirit what had already been said of Christ's work: the design of the Spirit's dwelling in man is,

> to heal our disordered souls, and to restore that image of his upon our nature, which is so defaced by our original and actual corruptions (491). [20]

So far it has been clear that Wesley assumed that the divine design was the restoration or recapitulation of man to his initial state. He followed Tilly in defining the nature of sin in the light of this design. Sin is the frustration of God's intention; it is man's denial of divine love. To grieve the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, means to inhibit his preventing and assisting

---

20. On Tilly's sermon, "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," see Appendix. With this passage, cf. "This likeness to God, this conformity of our will and affections to his will is, properly speaking holiness; and to produce this in us, is the proper end and design of all the influences of the Holy Spirit." p.491. Cf. also Sermon 139,iii -Works VII,498 - "As yet there is a Spirit ready to help his infirmities; who is willing, if he stretch out his hands to heaven, and bewail his ignorance and misery, to purify his heart from vile affections, and to renew it in the love of God, and so lead him by present, up to eternal happiness."

grace which alone makes restoration possible. Sin therefore is "an ungrateful return for infinite loving kindness." (487) Positively,

> There is a particular frame and temper of soul, a sobriety of mind, without which the Spirit of God will not concur in the purifying of our hearts. It is in our power, through his preventing and assisting grace, to prepare this in ourselves; and he expects we should, this being the foundation of all his after-works (ii,489).

This is the moment of humility, made possible by divine grace, and it marks the beginning of man's coming to faith. It is a humility, learned of Christ, through his Spirit.

Dr. Sugden correctly pointed to Wesley's indebtedness to William Law for his sections on humility in "The Circumcision of the Heart." (i,2-4; ii,1-W.v,203-4, 208-9) In the Serious Call, Law wrote that humility is "the foundation and support of every virtue and good work, the best guard and security of all holy affections."[21] Wesley interpreted "foundation" here to mean a preliminary stage; the moment of self-understanding enabled by prevenient grace. In this moment, man is convinced of that inbred corruption, that he is, in the words of the Article, "very far gone from original righteousness." (ii,I,208) Convicted of sin, man is disposed to embrace faith. Humility then is the character of repentance preparatory to faith.[22]

---

21. The Standard Sermons, I,268, note. My reference is to The Serious Call, op.cit., p.247.

22. "It being as impossible for us even to think a good thought, without the supernatural assistance of his Spirit, as to create ourselves, or to renew our whole souls in righteousness and true holiness." (i,3,204)

How then does Wesley understand the nature of faith? In "The Circumcision of the Heart," he writes that faith alone can make men whole; it is "the one medicine given under heaven to heal their sickness." (i,5 -204). His definition from the original sermon as delivered in 1733 reads:

> Faith is an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, -and in particular to those important truths, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"(i,7 - 205). [23]

This definition adds little to that of Bishop Pearson which was discussed by Wesley in his earlier correspondence with his mother. It should be noted, however, that the biblical image of faith as a "seeing" has assumed importance for him. Such a faith as the gift of spiritual discernment calls into question all human possibilities and excludes them. Speaking specifically to the alternatives which were being proposed by deists, rationalists and moralists, he shows himself to be homo unius libri:

> It were to be wished, that they were better acquainted with this faith, who employ much of their time and pains in laying another foundation; in grounding religion on the eternal fitness of things, on the intrinsic excellence of virtue, and the beauty of actions flowing from it; on the reasons,as they term them, of good and evil, and the relations of beings to each other. Either

---

23. The definition is problematical in that Wesley later added to it. See note at the foot of page 205. In the passage cited above I have omitted the words "not only," because these are only required by the addition.

> these accounts of the grounds of Christian duty coincide with the scriptural, or not... Our gospel, as it knows no other foundation of good works than faith, or of faith than Christ, so it clearly informs us, we are not his disciples while we either deny him to be the Author, or his Spirit to be the Inspirer and Perfecter, both of our faith and works... This is God's short and plain account of true religion and virtue; and "other foundation can no man lay." (ii,3-4, 209-210) [24]

Wesley's reaction could not be more explicit in this passage which is important for what it denies and for what it affirms. Faith is an assent to the work of God in Christ according to the Scriptures and this has become the pivotal element in his understanding of the design of Christianity. The definition was still not adequate, but faith had been clearly established as the foundation of the Christian life.

The Spirit which enables faith also bears witness that the believer is a child of God. Assurance is intrinsic to this hope:

> It is the same Spirit who works in them that clear and cheerful confidence that their heart is upright toward God; that good assurance, that they now do, through his grace, the things which are acceptable in his sight; that they are now in the path which leadeth to life, and shall, by the mercy of God, endure therein to the end. (i,9,206).

Wesley is concerned to show that his understanding of hope does not resemble "enthusiasm," which he defines as "an hope to attain the end without the means." (L.I,220) The believer must continually be supported by those instituted and prudential means

---

24. Cf. also i,6,204; ii,2,209.
The passage reflects the debate between William Law and Matthew Tindal. Law's response is to be found in The Case of Reason (1732). See Overton, Life and Opinions of William Law, chapter VIII.

through which the assisting grace of God confirms and blesses the life of holiness.[25]

Yet, according to the divine design, faith and hope are incomplete without love.

> If thou wilt be perfect, add to all these, charity; add love, and thou hast the circumcision of the heart (i,II,207).

In his sermon "On Love," based upon I Corinthians 13:3, Wesley enquires as to the meaning and properties of love. Again his method is plainly scriptural:

> That we may be under no possibility of mistake, we will not at all regard the judgment of men, but go to our Lord himself for an account of the nature of love; and, for the effects of it, to his inspired apostle. (S.139,ii - W.VII,495)

The love required by our Lord is the love of God and man, "of God, for his own sake, and of man, for God's sake." (Ibid) To love God is to delight in him, to rejoice in his will, to desire to please him, to seek and find happiness in him. (495)[26] Love for the neighbor is the desire for his happiness which, on Wesley's terms, means a devotion to the gracious intention of God for the

---

25. Cf. Letters I,93 and Sermon 101, "The Duty of Constant Communion," Works VII,147-157, especially, p.150, "As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself; namely, by being like him in holiness; as he knew we could do nothing towards this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven."

26. Cf. Letters, I, 76.

perfection of the other's life.[27] In his sermon on "The Circumcision of the Heart," Wesley's last word concerns the meaning of love. It is the final word because it was the primal word, - "the royal law of heaven and earth." It is not simply the first commandment; it is all the commandments in one. (i,II,207) Wesley is quite prepared to take literally the order of I Corinthians 13:13 and to affirm the primacy of love. This accounts for an unusual note of optimism in his sermon on the Holy Spirit:

> Thus to press forward, whither the promise of life calls him, - to turn his back upon the world, and comfort himself in God, - every one that has faith perceives to be just and necessary, and forces himself to do it: Every one that has hope, does it gladly and eagerly, though not without difficulty; but he that has love does it with ease and singleness of heart. (W.VII,516)

But such optimism does not remain unqualified in this early preaching. In another sermon Wesley says that perfect holiness and happiness are not to be found upon earth. "Some remains of our disease will ever be felt, and some physic will be necessary to heal it." (W.VII,366)[28] This was an ambiguity which would continue to shadow Wesley's doctrine of perfection.[29] Yet in his early

---

27. "For he hath commanded us, not only to love our neighbor, that is, all men, as ourselves, - to design and pursue their happiness as sincerely and steadily as our own..."(495) "So that whether he thinks or speaks, or whatever he does, it all points to the same end, - the advancing, by every possible way, the happiness of all his fellow-creatures."(496) Cf. William Law, The Serious Call, chap.XX, especially pp.330-335.

28. Cf. Sermon 101,i,2-Works VII, 148.

29. Wesley does, however, distinguish between "evils which prudence might have prevented, or piety removed, even in this life," and "the other evils which are necessary in this world, either as a consequence of sin, or for the cure of it." Sermon 127,ii,1,2 - Works VII, 369.

preaching the direction of his soteriology is clear. A critical passage in "The Circumcision of the Heart" rehearses material which was found to be common to most of his literary sources and which became explicit in John Norris' treatise on Prudence. It sums up Wesley's understanding of perfect love as the nature and end of the design of God.

> The one perfect good shall be your ultimate end. One thing shall ye desire for its own sake, -the fruition of Him that is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with Him that made them...One design you are to pursue to the end of time, -the enjoyment of God in time and in eternity. Desire other things, so far as they tend to this. Love the creature as it leads to the Creator. But in every step you take, be this the glorious point that terminates your view. Let every affection, and thought, and word, and work, be subordinated to this. Whatever ye desire or fear, whatever ye seek or shun, whatever ye think, speak, or do, be it in order to your happiness in God, the sole End, as well as Source of your being. (i,12,207) [30]

---

30. Cf. "Here, then, is the sum of the perfect law; this is the true circumcision of the heart. Let the spirit return to God that gave it, with the whole train of its affections."(ii,10,211). These two passages were quoted by Wesley in A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Works XI,368.
There is a manuscript sermon on Genesis 1:27 which Wesley preached in 1730 and on several occasions in the following years. It has not been established that Wesley composed this sermon, and there are a number of manuscripts of sermons which were not his own but which he was preaching during this period, including those of Benjamin Calamy and William Tilly. This particular sermon follows a common pattern and deals with the nature of the Image of God in man, the reasons for its loss and the means of its recovery. The characterizing of the initial image is of interest at this point, "His affections were rational, even just and regular, if we may be allowed to say affections, for properly speaking, he had but one: man was what God is, Love. Love filled the whole expansion of his soul; it possessed him without a rival. Every movement of his heart was Love: it knew no other fervour. Love was his vital heat; it was the genial warmth that animated his whole frame." (Section I) The manuscript is in the Methodist Archives in London. I am indebted to Dr. Frank Baker and to Mr. Charles Rogers, of Duke University for this information and for being able to inspect a transcript of this sermon.

Behind the pulpit rhetoric is the clearest statement of the intention of Wesley's early theology as revealed in his sermons.

An evaluation of this sermon material is facilitated by several reviews of his early preaching written by Wesley himself. The most extensive was initially included in a letter to Thomas Church and later incorporated in The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained. Wesley wrote:

> (I) From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should: for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of believing the gospel; taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers and that many of them "needed no repentance."
> (2) From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit. But it was only a little; and no wonder: for I did not preach faith in the blood of the covenant.
> (3) From 1734 to 1738, speaking more of faith in Christ, I saw more fruit of my preaching and visiting from house to house than ever I had done before. [31]

There are several points made in two other reviews. In his Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Wesley recalled how for many years after 1725 he was "utterly ignorant of the nature and condition of justification." Sometimes he confounded it with sanctification, particularly during the Georgia period. He was also confused as to the forgiveness of sins and believed that this awaited either the hour of death or the day of judgment. Also he confessed to having been ignorant of the nature of "saving faith." He had limited the meaning of faith to a "firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments." (Works VIII,111). In the other review, this time coming out of the proceedings of the Conference of 1746 and in answer to the question as to where the

---

31. Letters II,264; Works VIII,468.

Methodists' doctrine differed from that which they had preached at Oxford, the Minute stated:

> (1) We then knew nothing of that righteousness of faith, in justification; nor (2) Of the nature of faith itself, as implying consciousness of pardon. (W.VIII,290).

The sermons which have been considered support these verdicts. Firstly, there was a certain development of thought particularly with reference to the work of Christ and the operations of the Holy Spirit. The point was reached where faith was construed as having Christ as its author and the Spirit as its perfecter. Secondly, there was a clear indication that Wesley was "laying a deeper foundation of repentance." His criticisms of contemporary society with its "religious" or humanist claims prepared the way for his teaching on the necessity of humility and faith. Further, the amount of material on the Fall, the meaning of sin and sickness unto death, exposed man's helplessness apart from grace.

Yet the major weakness in Wesley's preaching centered on the meaning of faith. Faith was primarily an assent to, or a spiritual discernment of the validity of biblical propositions. In "The Circumcision of the Heart" these propositions were essentially soteriological in character but it was precisely at this point that Wesley found it necessary, in 1748, to add sentences which spoke of faith as a "sure confidence" in Christ's pardoning mercy. It is this fiduciary element which Restoration Anglicanism had viewed with marked hesitation which is also absent from Wesley's early definitions. In referring to the witness of the Spirit in this same sermon, Wesley does speak of "cheerful confidence," and

"good assurance." But the thrust of what is a mere textual extension has reference to the hope which the believer has for his own works, his Christian warfare and for his final reward.(i,9,206) Wesley had some knowledge of the requirements of a doctrine of assurance, but his reference to the witness of the Spirit has to do with the future direction of hope rather than with the present assurance of faith.[32]

Further, there is little mention of forgiveness in these sermons. Wesley seemed to be preoccupied with the incompleteness of existence. The theme of death is prominent in this period (L.I,120f). In this life man is "that wavering, fickle, self-inconsistent creature, sinning and repenting, and sinning again." The pardon of sin belongs to the day when "the warfare is accomplished." (S.127 ii 6,-W.VII,372) It almost seems that in these words preached in 1735 he had reverted to a thought of Jeremy Taylor which he had once found problematic - "A true penitent must all the days of his life pray for pardon and never think the work completed till he dies." (L.I,19)

In his later review Wesley also confessed to a confusion of justification and sanctification in his early preaching. It might be said that this was almost inevitable because this confusion was one of the problems inherent in the theology which Wesley had presupposed. Where Wesley assumed belief it is apparent that "the faith once delivered to the saints," is too immediately coupled with the "faith which works through love." (S.127 i-W.VII,368) The way of man's coming to faith and the meaning of justification

---

32. When, in 1736, Spangenberg asked Wesley whether he had the experience of the witness of the Spirit he "was surprised, and knew not what to answer." Journal, I, 151.

which negates human righteousness are not prominent themes in Wesley's early writings. William Tilly made the chief contribution to the selection of sermons on this point as he helped Wesley fill in some of the elements. Sinful man is arrested by the prevenient grace of God which grants him the freedom to see his dilemma and to realize his need. This grace reduces man's pride to despair and to that humility which allows the assent of faith. This formulation was to be retained and developed by Wesley.

While Wesley found much to criticize in his early preaching, it should not be overlooked that there were motifs in these sermons with which he was satisfied and which would be repeated in important formulations of later years. If this material expresses certain weaknesses in the theology which Wesley had inherited, it also faithfully relays some of the major tenets of Anglican piety. The intention of his preaching was to show that salvation meant the restoration of man to his initial perfection. His exposition of the Fall, as we have seen, prepared a foundation for repentance, but it did more than that. It served to heighten the description of the primal state of man's innocence and holiness and so anticipated the account of the <u>telos</u> of the Christian life. In Wesley's early sermons the way to faith is not clear and faith, itself as assent, tends to be resolved into hope. However, there is no question that holiness and love had been established as the characteristics of the Christian's life in the world and that Wesley had settled upon a cardinal principle, indeed a pattern, for his theology.

Appendix: John Wesley's Early Sermons

It may be useful to list the early sermons which are accessible and to comment on some of the literary problems. Dr. E. H. Sugden did this, in part, in his introduction to "The Circumcision of the Heart," and I am indebted to his account for some of the following references, The Standard Sermons, I,263-266.

1725: A sermon on Matthew 6:33. (no title). Not published in the Works. Presumably this was Wesley's first sermon following his ordination to the diaconate, Journal, I,59-60 cf. V.432 and note 5. A facsimile was published in Wesley's First Sermon and Other Beginnings (London: Kelly, 1903). There is also an excellent photographic copy of the original manuscript in the Drew Library, sent to Dr. Ezra S. Tipple by Mr. Russell J. Colman in 1927.

Sermon 135: "On Mourning for the Dead," (II Samuel 12:23). Published posthumously-Works VII, 463-468. The date in Jackson's sub-title is in error. It was preached at the funeral service of Robin Griffiths, February 15, 1727, Journal I,62. It was delivered at Broadway and not at Epworth.

Sermon 136: "On Corrupting the Word of God," (II Corinthians 2:17). Published posthumously-Works VII, 468-473. Jackson notes that it was preached about the year 1728.

Sermon 137: "On the Resurrection of the Dead," (I Corinthians 15:35). Published posthumously-Works VII,474-485. The sermon was originally written by Benjamin Calamy. It is here abridged, cf. Thirteen Sermons Preached on Several Occasions by Calamy (1726) Sermon Eleven, pp. 275-317. A longer extract appears in the Christian Library, XXIII, 302-323.

Sermon 101: "The Duty of Constant Communion," (Luke 22:19). Works VII, 147-157. Written originally for his students at Oxford in 1732. Published in the Arminian Magazine, 1787, pp.229-236 and republished in the 1788 edition of Sermons. Wesley's preface reads, "The following Discourse was written above five-and-fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I do now. But, I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments in any point which is therein delivered. 1788."

Sermon 17 (in Sugden's numbering of the Standard Sermons, 13): "The Circumcision of the Heart," (Romans 2:29). Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, January 1st, 1733. The only early sermon to be included in the Standard Sermons, Sugden, I, 263-279. A single addition is noted in section i.7 which extends the definition of faith. This was added by Wesley in 1748. This most important sermon evidently gave Wesley some satisfaction, Letters, IV,299, Journal VI, 209. It is quoted extensively in The Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Works XI, 367-369.

Sermon 138: "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," (Ephesians 4:30). Published posthumously in the Arminian Magazine, 1798, pp.607-613, with the sub-title, "Written in the Year, 1733." It was included in the Works VII, 485-492, without further comment.
I have found no mention of the fact that this sermon was an extract from a University sermon, with the same title and text, preached by Dr. William Tilly on May 25th, 1708. Tilly's sermon appears as the eleventh in the volume, Sixteen Sermons (All, except One) Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's upon Several Occasions (London: Bernard Lintott, 1712), pp.312-344. Upon collating Wesley's edited version with the original, I found the structure and reduced content to be identical. William Tilly was a Fellow of Corpus Christi College and Rector of Albury in Oxfordshire. Wesley made one reference to his sermons: "Dr. Tilly's sermons on Free Will are the best I ever saw. His text is, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.'" Letters I, 184. These sermons are numbered VIII and IX in the above volume. The copy of this volume used is housed in the New York Public Library.

Sermon 127: Job 3:17. Jackson provided the title, "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men." - Works VII, 365-372. It was preached at Oxford on September 21, 1735. Wesley published it in the same year, Green Bibliography, No. 5. Jackson has a long prefatory note which asserts that the sermon "exhibits a very inadequate view of real Christianity." (p.365). Tyerman also charged it with "un-Wesleyan theology" in regard to perfection but praises its defense against the persecutors at Oxford. Life and Times, I,105f.

Sermon 139: "On Love," (I Corinthians 13:3). Published posthumously - Works VII, 492-499. Sugden strangely omits all reference to this sermon in his summary. The sub-title should read, "Preached at Savannah, March 7th, 1736. Cf. Journal I,176, note 1 and also I,438, note 1. Cf. also references to the theme of the sermon Letters, I, 36 and Telford's note, p.34 and Letters I,219 and note 1 where the incorrect dating is repeated.

Sermon 141: "On the Holy Spirit," (II Corinthians 3:17). Published posthumously - Works VII, 508-520. The dating remains a problem. The heading reads, "Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, on Whit-Sunday, 1736, (June 13th). Wesley was in fact in Frederica on that date. Sugden suggests two alternatives, either the editor of the sermons was mistaken in his date or the sermon was read by Wesley's substitute, which was quite possible, Standard Sermons, I,265f.

Note: (a) It is quite possible that some of these sermons were extracted from the writings of other preachers as was the case with Sermons 137 and 138.

(b) It is also possible that some of Wesley's later printed sermons originated in this period.
/Curnock claimed that Wesley's sermon, "On Hell," (No.73) - Works VI,381-391 was "obviously a sermon composed in pre-evangelistic days, and is full of academic quotations and allusions." (Journal I,139,note on Monday 19th January,1736). Curnock acknowledged that Wesley took the final quotation for this sermon from Isaac Watts, but failed to realize that this source was not published until 1738-39. The quotation is from Watts' Discourse on "The Nature of the Punishments in Hell," which was one of a series of discourses published under the title, The World to Come. Cf. The Works of Isaac Watts (London:Longman,1813), VII,272. Although the preliminary essay to this volume had been published anonymously in 1732, the whole work was not published until 1738-39. Cf. Allibone, Dictionary of Authors (Philadelphia: Lippincott,1871), III,2614a; D.N.B.,LX,68 and Arthur Paul Davis, Isaac Watts, His Life and Works (London: Independent, 1948) p.275 (1732) and p.277 (1739)/.

(c) There are also extant manuscripts of sermons which Wesley preached during this early period, some of which have been traced to other authors, notably Benjamin Calamy and William Tilly. See also, note 30 in this present chapter, for one such sermon and for the source of this information.

C. REFLECTIONS UPON DESPAIR

Throughout Wesley's journal and letters of this early period there are indications of a concern about his own religious integrity. His two decisions in 1734 and 1735, firstly to decline his father's charge at Epworth and, secondly, to accept the mission to Georgia, have an ambivalence about them which calls into question his understanding of faith and ministry. The influence of the Moravians during the course of his mission and, subsequently, upon his return to England served to focus his doubts. They helped to prepare the way for a personal appropriation of the gospel which, all the time, he had loyally been attempting to proclaim. The purpose of this section is to listen to Wesley's expressions of despair in order to discern how his understanding of the nature of love and faith was corroborated or qualified in this period when he believed that he was failing himself and the Church's calling.

At the end of 1734 Wesley decided to refuse to succeed his father in the living at Epworth. He had been considering this for some time (L.I,134), but finally he listed his numerous reasons in a long letter dated December 10th-19th,1734 (L.I,166-178).[33] These reasons can be reduced to one major concern - his desire to promote holiness in himself and others. He wrote:

> So long as I can keep my eye single and steadily fixed on the glory of God, I have no more doubt of the way wherein I should go than of the shining of the sun

---

33. The letter, condensed and with some alterations, is in the Journal II, 159-166.

> at noonday. That course of life tends most to the glory of God wherein we can most promote holiness in ourselves and others (L.I,167,3-4).[34]

Although there is allegedly no conflict of interest between the holiness of others and personal holiness, Wesley's confessed order is very clear. He must think firstly of his own improvement; a physician must first heal himself (L.I,168,5). "The holier any man is in himself the more he shall promote holiness in others" (L.I,172,14). By holiness, Wesley did not mean fasting, austerity or other outward means but those requirements by which he had defined the circumcision of the heart:

> the inward temper, to which all these are subservient, a renewal of the soul in the image of God. I mean a complex habit of lowliness, meekness, purity, faith, hope, and the love of God and man (L.I,168,6).

There were, of course, empirical reasons which Wesley was able to give for his decision. At Oxford, the conversations with his fellows, the academic retirement, the freedom from care, the possibilities for worship, all these subscribed to his singular aim (L.I,168-170,7-11). Although he agreed with his father that God had made man for a social life, he was finding through a communio sanctorum - the Holy Club, opportunities for serving the lowly as well as the learned (L.I, 171,173,13,16).[35] When his father

---

34. "When two ways of life are proposed, I should choose to begin with that part of the question, Which of these have I rational ground to believe will conduce most to my own improvement?" L.I,168,5.

35. His father had written, "I cannot allow austerity or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness; nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life...To this academical studies are only preparatory." Moore, Life,I,211. Cf. John Gambold's account of Wesley's social service at Oxford, Journal VIII, Appendix V, pp.265-268, also L.I,132.

and, even more pertinently, his brother Samuel, criticized his reasoning, Wesley resorted to his bishop who informed him that his ordination did not mean that he was bound to a parish ministry if he could better serve in another situation (L.I,182).[36]

What emerges most clearly from this problematic correspondence is a formula which has now become quite familiar. In describing the life of holiness Wesley was rehearsing the unum necessarium which he had learned from his tradition and from several of his mentors. If this letter contains elements of preciousness which distinguished his position from that of his father, and a certain self-righteousness which his brother condemned, his reasoning reflects the stubborn consistency of his preoccupation with his sanctification. There were no new theological factors in this decision, but simply the reiteration of his belief that the salvation of his soul depended, above all, upon his holy living. As he wrote:

> I cannot, therefore, but observe that the question does not relate barely to degrees of perfection, but to the very essence and being of it...The point is, whether I shall or shall not work out my salvation, whether I shall serve Christ or Belial (L.I,171,11).

John Wesley's lengthy apology for remaining at Oxford hardly prepares the reader for his next and even more significant resolu-

---

36. His father's word for his argument was "existical." Stevenson, p.146. His brother wrote, "I see your love to yourself; but your love to your neighbour I do not see." Moore,I,212. "Your friends, retirement, frequent ordinances, and freedom from care, are great blessings. All except the last, you may expect in a lower degree, elsewhere. Sure, all your labours are not come to this, that more is absolutely necessary for you, for the very being of your Christian life, than for the salvation of all the parish-priests in England. It is very strange!" Ibid. p.227. Most of the correspondence on this issue is in Moore's Life, I,210-231. See also Stevenson, pp.146-148 for a critical letter from Samuel Snr. to his eldest son in which he discusses John's decision.

tion. Six months after his father's death in April of 1735, he had left Oxford and England for Georgia. This decision to become a missioner to the Indians was made after consultations with his brother, Samuel, with Clayton, Byrom, Law and also his mother. Susannah showed her usual intrepidity by announcing, "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more."[37]

One of the puzzles of Wesley's biography is the apparent reversal which took place in his mind between the time of his reply to his father about Epworth and his positive response to the Georgia trustees.[38] Yet, although the latter decision, at first

---

37. Moore, Life,I,234. The sympathy of the Wesley family for the missionary enterprise is discussed by Simon, John Wesley and the Religious Societies,p.111, Martin Schmidt, The Young Wesley (London: Epworth,1958), p.19 and V.H.H.Green, The Young Mr. Wesley, pp.252-254.

38. We have no letters written between April and October, 1735 which refer to any change in heart as to his ministerial responsibilities. The gap is bridged by a brief account in "A Short History of the People called Methodists." "Having now attained what I had long desired, a company of friends that were as my own soul, I set up my rest, being fully determined to live and die in this sweet retirement. But in spring, 1735, I was suddenly called to attend my dying father...Almost as soon as I returned to Oxford, I was obliged to go to London, where I was strongly solicited to go over to Georgia, in order to preach to the Indians. This, at first, I peremptorily refused; but many providential incidents followed, which at length constrained me to alter my resolutions." Works XIII,304. Cf. Sermon 132,i,4-Works VII,422 where Wesley refers to "a strange chain of providences." One further document is of interest in this connection. Toward the end of 1735 Wesley published his father's Advice to a Young Clergyman, (Green, Bibliography No.4). John Wesley's own preface to this work seems to reflect a new intention. The last paragraph reads: "If any Ambassador of Christ in meditating herein, shall feel the Fire kindle in himself also; if he finds his own Heart burn within him, to promote the glory of his ever blessed Redeemer, let him in that acceptable Time, beseech him that he would send forth more such Labourers into his Harvest: And that, in particular, he would enable the Publisher hereof, to approve himself as the Minister of God, by spending his Life in gathering the poor Sheep that are scattered abroad, and, if need be, pouring out his Blood for them." First and only edition (London: Rivington).

sight, seems to constitute a radical change, there are important parallels between his penchant for Oxford and his accepting the post in America. His intention, in both cases, was to avoid the sophistications of a hindering secularism in order to nourish his personal holiness. Oxford provided such conditions and, idealistically, Wesley thought that Georgia would do the same. His correspondence with his Oxford friend and Georgia trustee, John Burton, reveals that the quest for holiness was still the supreme consideration of his life.[39] In an important letter to Burton he wrote that his "chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul." Explaining this, he said,

> I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen...By these ...I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints; the genuine and full extent of those laws which none can understand who mind earthly things...A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me (L.I,188-189).

In the remainder of this letter Wesley lists his personal reasons for seeking a non-corrosive missionary situation. His conception of the "noble savage" tends to naiveté and, in fact, most of his

---

39. It is sometimes overlooked that the Trustees had invited, not only Wesley, but the members of the Holy Club to go to Georgia. Burton's first letter, September 8th, 1735, makes this clear (J.VIII,285).

ideals were to be exploded by the tough reality of colonial life.[40]

Yet his prime motive, the saving of his own soul, needs further comment. This was not an isolated statement but a consistent intention and one which the Oxford members of the missionary party shared in common.[41] It was linked with his further reason for going to Georgia:

> I then hope to know what it is to love my neighbour as myself, and to feel the powers of that second motive to visit the heathens, even the desire to impart to them what I have received - a saving knowledge of the gospel of Christ (L.I,190).

---

40. Speaking of the heathen to which he was going, he speculates on the possible impact of the gospel: "They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God; and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach whether it be of God." (L.I,188).
Martin Schmidt in his analysis of Wesley's decision writes: "He saw the majesty of the Word of God standing so absolutely alone that all human activity lost its value...It is impossible not to recognize the intrinsic greatness of this concept of mission. In its reverence for the Word of God, derived from a daily study of the Greek New Testament, it is already a step in the direction of Luther." John Wesley, p.134.
This analysis claims too much. With insufficient documentation, it describes a perspective which is Schmidt's rather than Wesley's.

41. "Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want, God having given us plenty of temporal blessings, nor to gain riches or honor, but singly this-to save our souls, to live wholly to the glory of God." J.I,109 cf. also L.I,76 where Pascal is invoked to make a similar point. John Burton had endorsed this intention but significantly had reversed the order of thought, "The motive to your pious undertaking is the desire of doing good to the souls of others, and in consequence of that to your own." J.VIII,286.
For a later change in Wesley's formula, see his Address to the Clergy, Works X,486. (iii,1).

But he wonders whether God would work through such a "grievous sinner." So he continues:

> But I am assured, if I be once fully converted myself, He will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren and to preach his name to the Gentiles, that the very ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God (L.I,190).[42]

Ever since Coke and Moore wrote their early biography of Wesley in 1792, it has been pointed out that the chief reason for the Georgia decision was his desire to withdraw from the sophisticated world. These early biographers, allegedly on the basis of personal acquaintance and conversation with Wesley, spoke of his "undue love of retirement," somewhat akin to that of the Egyptian hermits. In this he was supported by the Mystic writers who presupposed the necessity of withdrawing "to the desert." This, according to Coke and Moore, was Wesley's own version of the matter and there is no reason to question their sympathetic although not uncritical account.[43]

---

42. Cf. J. I,422.

43. Life of John Wesley p.91-92. Most recently, Martin Schmidt, although not acknowledging this source, has followed this direction but has put Wesley's decision in the best possible light. "In the present instance the emphasis on the salvation of his own soul is only the subjective side of a similar strong conviction. John Wesley is here concerned with the original understanding of the Gospel, and this is only revealed in a situation akin to the original one, that is, in a heathen environment...He saw in missionary activity the key to the original meaning of the Gospel, the rebirth of primitive Christianity, the existential way towards his own salvation." John Wesley, pp.132,134. But it is doubtful whether Wesley's letter to Burton can bear this construction, when so much of it involves Wesley's confessing those weaknesses -sensual pleasures, women, vanity of speech, love of possessions -from which he wants to be removed. L.I,188-190.

For our purposes it is only necessary to underline how, in this correspondence, Wesley was connecting "a saving knowledge of the gospel," with the divine law of holiness. The conversion of which he speaks is not in terms of the faith which justifies but rather in terms of personal sanctification. Although he acknowledged, in one place, that the happiness which God designed is to be found only in faith and love and joy in the Holy Spirit, (L.I,189) the whole emphasis is upon the goal of perfection. While waiting to embark for Georgia he wrote a letter to his brother, Samuel, in which he offered an admonition to the Master at Tiverton and then repeated his common formulation of the gospel:

> So many souls are committed to your charge by God, to be prepared for a happy eternity. You are to instruct them, not only in the beggarly elements of Greek and Latin, but much more in the gospel. You are to labor with all your might to convince them that Christianity is not a negation or an external thing, but a new heart, a mind conformed to that of Christ, 'faith working by love.' (L.I,192-193).

His emphasis is to be seen even more clearly in his reply to the question as to whether he could not save his soul in England just as well as in Georgia:

> I answer,-No; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there; neither, if I stay here, knowing this, can I reasonably hope to attain any degree of holiness at all (L.I,190).

Then he employs some reasoning which he had already used in his letter on Epworth:

> For whoever, when two ways of life are proposed, prefers that which he is convinced in his own mind is less pleasing to God and less conducive to the perfection of his soul,has no reason from the Gospel of Christ to hope that he shall ever please God at all or receive from Him that grace whereby alone he can attain any degree of Christian perfection.[44]

---

44. Cf. L.I,168 (5).

So Wesley's aim, in both the Epworth and Georgia decisions, was similar. Everything he had learned and taught thus far, including the scriptural principle which he held so firmly, pointed to the absolute law of holiness. To fulfill this law, Wesley believed that he must be apart from the temptations of the mundane world. His hesitations reflect his sense of sinfulness before this law. Conversion was from sin to holiness. Faith amounted to faithfulness. The saving knowledge of the gospel was an awareness that grace would enable God's design to be fulfilled in the believer who was striving to obey "the whole law." Salvation meant perfection. It is this personal goal which dominates this correspondence; even his declared love for the neighbour is diminished by it. Again the words of his last sermon at Epworth may be recalled, for we are now in a better position to understand them:

> I spoke with the utmost clearness of having one design, one desire, one love, and of pursuing the one end in all our words and actions (L.IV,299).

Wesley had been most faithful to the sources of his theological thinking and especially to that other-worldliness which the Mystics had encouraged. Later he realized the fallacy and the reason for his discontent:

> In this refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein till the time of my leaving England (J.I,469-470).

It remains now to note some events which occurred during the voyage to Georgia and his stay there. His several storm experiences reveal an interesting correlation of fear and love which support the argument that, at this stage, Wesley was preoccupied with his definition of religion as perfect love. On Saturday, January 17th,

in the midst of his first experience of a storm at sea, he confessed in his Diary that "he was afraid to die." (J.I,138). When calm was restored he was amazed that such a storm had not had a more salutary effect on the voyagers, and he concluded:

> I could not have believed that so little Good would have been done by the Terror they were in before. But it cannot be that they should obey God from Fear, who are deaf to the Motives of Love.[45]

Several days later another storm began and Wesley asked himself, "How is it that thou hast not faith?", and again he commented that he was unwilling to die (J.I,140). But the question of faith remained unanswered. During yet a third storm he expressed his admiration for the fortitude of the Moravians who calmly sang through the tumult. He ascertained from them that they were not afraid of death and this gave him some courage to preach to the trembling. But once again his conclusion shows the orientation of his thinking:

> I can conceive no difference comparable to that between a smooth and rough sea, except that which is between a mind calmed by the love of God and one torn up by the storms of earthly passion (J.I,143).

These accounts may be compared with one further instance, a few months later, when Wesley described the worst storm he had ever seen. Speaking of the thunder and lightning, he wrote:

> This voice of God, too, told me I was not fit to die; since I was afraid rather than desirous of it. Oh, when shall I wish to be dissolved and to be with Christ? When I love Him with all my heart (J,I,246).

---

45. Curnock's rendering is not clear, J.I,139. This quotation is from the First Edition of the Extract of the Journal (Bristol: Farley,n.d.) p.6; cf. Green Bibliography No.13. See also Works I,20 where the original text is preserved with one minor addition ("that they should long to obey God").

In each incident Wesley had linked his fears with his lack of perfection. This correlation of fear with love is most clearly expressed in a later reflection which is included in the Journal under January 24th, 1738, and which, because of its importance, must be quoted at length:

> I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh, who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. ...I think, verily, if the gospel be true, I am safe: for I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor; I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me; but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can), if haply I may attain it. I now believe the gospel is true. 'I show my faith by my works,' by staking my all upon it...But in a storm I think, What if the gospel be not true? Then thou art of all men most foolish. For what hast thou given thy goods, thy ease, thy friends, thy reputation, thy country, thy life? For what art thou wandering across the face of the earth? - A dream, a cunningly-devised fable! (J.I,418).

This analysis of the gospel, partly in terms of I Corinthians 13, supports the conclusion drawn so far. Wesley was so sure that perfect love was the whole design of Christianity, that all his endeavors, including the endeavor of faith, tended to that end. His faith, however, was being called into question.

Wesley had been in America for only two days when he had to endure an investigation of his own self-understanding at the hands of the learned Spangenberg. The conversation was as follows:

> I asked Mr. Spangenberg's advice with regard to myself- to my own conduct. He told me he could say nothing till he had asked me two or three questions. "Do you know yourself? Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused and said, "I know He

> is the Saviour of the world." "True," he replied; "but do you know He has saved you?" I answered, "I hope He has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." But I fear they were vain words (J.I,151).[46]

This dialogue confirms that Wesley believed he had a saving knowledge of the gospel but, in spite of his constant repetition of Paul's words on the witness of the Spirit, he seemed to lack any sense of a personal assurance of faith.

Meanwhile he attempted to preach faithfully. His first sermon at Savannah was preached on the Epistle for the day, I Corinthians 13 (J.I,176).[47] A few simple sentences from a conversation with an unbeliever illustrates the substance of his apologetic:

> You are going to a country where everyone speaks the love of God. The citizens of heaven understand no other language. They converse with none who do not understand it. Indeed, none such are admitted there. I am sent from God to teach you this (J.I,231).[48]

His desire to preach such a message was unabated. When pressure was brought upon him to counter "Popery" in the colony, he thought this to be nothing but "an overgrown zeal for Protestantism," and preferred to address himself to the problem of infidelity among the Deists. He held out far more hope for the Papists than these Deists (J.I,357-358).

---

46. The Diary for this day reads, "Mr. Spallenberg (Wesley's spelling) a wise man! Advise me as to myself."

47. Cf. S.139 -Works VII, 492-499; L.I,219.

48. For another simple apologetic, J.I, 350-351.

During his time in Georgia he was in constant conversation with the Moravians.[49] They affirmed that faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1)," which ordinarily comes by hearing and is made perfect by works (J.I,372-373). The qualifications necessary for membership among the Brethren were "to know, to love, and to follow Christ" (J.I,373). Such a confession began to bring into focus a new understanding of the meaning of faith. Wesley had always assented, of course, to the being and laws of God. But during his journey home, he wrote down what he knew had been lacking:

> By the most infallible proofs, inward feeling, I am convinced, of unbelief; having no such faith in Christ, as will prevent my heart from being troubled; which it could not be, if I believed in God, and rightly believed also in Him (J.I,415).

Because he now realized the Christological nature of faith he confessed in the words of à Kempis, "Nihil est quod hactenus feci." He had been building without a proper foundation (J.I,416 and note 1).

So Wesley returned to England. He had left its shores to teach the Indians the nature of Christianity; he returned questioning whether he himself had been converted. All his philosophy, his theological ability, his charity, his suffering, his faithful use of the means of grace, he now counted useless (J.I,422f). In a final reflection on his experiences in Georgia, Wesley wrote:

---

49. The original edition of the Journal had the following note which was later altered, "From ten friends (by which Wesley means the Holy Club) I am a while secluded; and He hath opened me a door into the whole Moravian Church." op.cit., p.13. See J.I,171 and Curnock's note 1.

> Having the sentence of death in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope, but that of being justified freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus; I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and "be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

The faith he desired was that which had once been described in the Anglican Homily, "a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God." (J.I,424).[50] The last passage of his first Journal employs words and phrases which Wesley had often used but the mood has changed considerably:

> I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it; for whosoever hath it, is "freed from sin, the" whole "body of sin is destroyed" in him: he is freed from fear, "having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." And he is freed from doubt, "having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him"; which "Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God." (J.I,424).

This paragraph was written later than his months of despair, yet it adequately sums up Wesley's position and prayer at the end of his missionary period. It is to be noted that the pattern of the Christian life had not changed. The nature of Christianity was still described in the terms he had inherited. It was the foundation for this life which was being questioned and had yet to be claimed. He was now on the edge of his discovery. In fact he had already begun to articulate the true meaning of faith - the faith, not of a servant, but of a son caught up into a new reality inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

---

50. "For how can a man have this true faith, this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins be remitted (forgiven), and he reconciled to the favor of God...." Cranmer, Miscellaneous Writings, II, 133.

D. THE NEW DOCTRINE

An attempt has now been made to describe the theological background against which Wesley developed as churchman and missionary. The sources which nurtured his thinking generally affirmed that the discipline of a holy life was the essential way of salvation. His version of the scriptural principle served to confirm this and an examination of both his belief and despair has shown the consistency of his concern and quest for holiness in this early period. The events of 1738 mark the final phase of Wesley's journey from belief to faith.

Although Wesley's missionary work cannot be discounted as a complete failure (J.I,435), it is evident that he had become disillusioned. He had preached on the primacy of the holy-love of God and upon the nature of the Christian life in the light of this truth. Yet repeatedly, he had been confronted with his own sense of sinfulness, his fears and doubts, and these questioned the reality of his faith. Faith, for him, had meant an assenting to the propositions of revelation, to the laws of God as contained in the Scriptures, and indeed to the fact of redemption through the work of Christ. This faith, however, had not sustained him. He had wrestled on toward holiness with a growing conviction of the utter inadequacy of his righteousness and works before God. There had been no lasting peace because there had been no ground for assurance.

In Georgia he had begun to see the gleam of a new possibility. As soon as he returned to England he preached on "the new creature in Christ." But his sermons offended many and he was

banned from preaching (J.I,436).[51] In early February Wesley met Peter Böhler (J.I,436, note 4). The first remark of the Moravian which Wesley recorded was, "My brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away" (J.I,440). This comment could have referred either to the content or the method of Wesley's thinking. The lingering trappings of natural theology were still apparent in a theology which was characterized by a doctrine of creation rather than of redemption in Christ. Further, Wesley had retained, with some pride, the analytical techniques of the Oxford logician. Every new proposition had to be sifted through that inquiring mind and tested by the scriptures, tradition, reason and experience.[52]

At the beginning of March, Wesley had been "convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved" (J.I,442). This is the immediate context for his well-known confession and for Böhler's wise counsel:

> Immediately it struck into my mind, "Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?" I asked Böhler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, "By no means." I asked, "But what can I preach?" He said, "Preach faith <u>till</u> you have it; and then, <u>because</u> you have it, you <u>will</u> preach faith."

---

51. It is of interest to note that this banning began <u>before</u> his meeting with Peter Böhler.

52. For an interesting note on the rejection of natural theology in Böhler and Zinzendorf, Schmidt, <u>John Wesley</u>, pp.235f and notes. Böhler also felt that the intense moralism of the Wesley brothers and their use of à Kempis had prevented them from understanding the nature of faith. <u>Ibid</u>. p.236. Schmidt's important contribution to our understanding of this period is largely due to his use of Böhler's Diary and other Herrnhut material. Although Böhler and William Law would have construed "philosophy" differently, the latter also had criticized Wesley's philosophical religion, cf. Overton, <u>William Law</u>, p. 80.

So Wesley began preaching "the new doctrine" of <u>salvation by faith alone</u> (J.I,442).[53] The goal of the Christian life was still "holiness and happiness," but now the basis was his new understanding of the nature of faith.[54] He returned to his New Testament to seek confirmation (J.I,447), and he also returned to the Homilies of the Anglican tradition (J.I,454). There was no question that faith was a sure trust and confidence in the forgiveness of God through the merits of Christ. Neither could he deny that "the witness of the Spirit" was integral to this faith. He did hesitate, however, before the Moravian claim that saving faith was given "in a moment." (J.I.454). But again his reading of the Scriptures supported their claim, and when he heard the testimonies of Böhler's friends, his disputing was at an end. He saw that the "instantaneous work" of grace was the only adequate description of the radical disjunction between the old life under the law and the new birth according to the gospel.[55]

He continued to proclaim the nature and fruits of faith

---

53. These words were italicized in the first edition of the Journal Extract (London: Strahan, 1740) p.13.

54. "I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith,- the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it." (J.I,447,Thurs.23rd,March).

55. The idea of instantaneous conversion was bitterly opposed by Charles Wesley at this time, J.I,456, note 1.

"as it is in Jesus," encouraged particularly by Böhler and John Gambold.[56] Yet a letter which he wrote on May 24th shows that he was still seeking the peace and assurance which belongs to such a faith (L.I,244-245).

It was during this month of May that Wesley turned again to William Law. He could not help comparing the insights of Böhler with the teaching of his former tutor. He wrote two letters and he received two replies from Law. Wesley's correspondence is strained and critical but it brings to expression the defects he had found in his own theological thinking and for which he held Law partly responsible. He had been using Law's practical treatises as a model for his preaching. They had helped him to proclaim the law as "great, wonderful, and holy." But he had come to see that the divine imperative was too high for man, and also that man is not justified by doing the works of the law (L.I,239). So he had resorted to the means of grace but he could not overcome his sense of the impossibility of perfect obedience. He then told Law of Peter Böhler and of his understanding of faith:

> Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, indeed, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy

---

56. Cf. Böhler's letter, J.I,461f. Gambold wrote to Charles Wesley about this time pointing out that the rediscovered doctrine of faith in Christ cut across all attempts at human righteousness and therefore was bound to be resisted. In words reminiscent of Luther, Gambold wrote, "The doctrine of faith is a downright robber. It takes away all this wealth, and only tells us, it is deposited for us with somebody else, upon whose bounty we must live like mere beggars." J.I,463. In a later paragraph, which Wesley omitted from the Journal, Gambold offered this necessary advice, "Let us speak of every thing in such a manner as may convey glory to Christ, without letting it glance on ourselves by the way. Let us profess, when we can with truth, how really the Christian salvation is fulfilled in us, rather than how sublimely." The whole letter is printed in Moore's Life,I,380-382. This last quotation,p.382.

> own works and thy own righteousness, and fly to Him. For whosoever cometh unto Him, He will in no wise cast out (L.I,239).

Why had Law not given him this advice? He should have seen, charged Wesley, that his young admirer had only "that speculative, notional, airy shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart." Such a concept of faith could not be compared with "the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus." Wesley ended this first letter with the blunt suggestion that Law's leaning toward mysticism had prevented his having a true faith himself (L.I,240).

William Law's reply showed, in Overton's words, "the handiwork of a consummate master of the art of controversy."[57] He wondered how Wesley could have read his two treatises, and further how he could have translated à Kempis, without recognizing that their doctrine of faith accorded with Böhler's definition (J.VIII, 320-321). Did not the Theologica Germanica which he had loaned Wesley also spell out the meaning of faith in Christ? Law asserted that two dominical maxims were fundamental to his own writings: "Without me ye can do nothing," and "If any man will come after me or be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." Then, echoing an alternative which Anglicanism had chosen to oppose, he wrote,

> If you are for separating the doctrine of the Cross from faith in Christ, or following Him, you have numbers and names enough on your side, but not me.

The sentence repeats the Restoration criticism of a separation of justification and sanctification and the solifidian doctrine of imputation which seemed to render the righteousness of "the new

---

57. The Life and Opinions of William Law, p.86.

man" unnecessary. Looking more closely at Wesley's definition of faith in "the blood of Jesus," Law warned him that his use of new expressions did not mean that he had a new conception of faith (J.VIII,322). In answer to the charge that mysticism had obscured his understanding of the real nature of faith he asserted that faith in Jesus Christ was the "very sum and substance of what is meant by mystical religion." It is obvious that Law and Wesley were now speaking past each other, although Law was stating a position with which Wesley would once have acknowledged as his own.

Wesley, in this time of feverish soul-searching, would not let the matter rest and, like a terrier, he attacked once again.[58] He waived secondary details and turned to what he considered to be the chief issue -whether Law had ever directed him to seek a living, justifying faith "in the blood of Christ." (L.I,241). From the Theologica Germanica he had remembered something about Christ as Pattern, but nothing in particular about Christ as Atonement. Law's two scriptural maxims did not adequately express the nature of saving faith in that they did not speak of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. If Law's teaching was valid, it was valid only for those who had faith already (L.I,242).

Law's second reply was devastating. He had always regarded Wesley not as a novice but as a clergyman who had made a profession of divinity. He had, therefore, recommended mature sources for his reading. Once again he told Wesley that his

---

58. The fact that his second letter is dated May 20th, one day after Law's first letter was written shows his tension and concern. Cf. Brazier Green, John Wesley and William Law, p.69 on the question of this date.

insistence upon certain textual formulae, for example, "the blood of Christ," amounted to a mere contest in semantics. In a final paragraph Law disowned all responsibility for Wesley's dilemma (L.I,244).

It is apparent that Law's criticism of Wesley's parading particular formulae for faith had some point to it. Wesley was attempting to describe his new-found doctrine in those scriptural and pietist expressions which were meaningful to the Moravians. The sacrificial language, which limited the work of Christ to his death, would not have appealed to Law, but it is doubtful whether he even realized the intention of Wesley's phrases.[59] Further, Law's two maxims spoke to the issue so obliquely that, as Wesley saw, they could refer to an imitatio Christi without any allusion to the atonement. It has already been noted that Law held the basic doctrines of man's depravity and the new birth in an orthodox manner. Linking these two doctrines are the necessary principles of atonement and faith. But these latter tenets were assumed rather than proclaimed in the two practical treatises. Law was more concerned to show that the life of the believer was new because of its orientation to that perfect life which is God's lawful design for his creatures. This life called for the renunciation of the world, for self-denial, for mortification. It is, therefore, understandable that Wesley, who had accepted implicitly the direction of Law's thought, now found his delineation of the basis

---

59. Stephen Hobhouse noted that, "Law himself had no more sympathy with the Moravians as a body than he had with the Methodists." William Law and Eighteenth-Century Quakerism (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927) p.316,note 2.

of this life to be inadequate. He had been so burdened by the casuistry of Law's perfectionism that he now could only confess that, without an experience of saving faith in Christ, the treatises had kept him under the law (J.I,470,9).[60]

Before turning to consider the importance of May 24th, it may be well to summarize the teaching of Böhler. A few months later, when Wesley was in Germany, he wrote down what he regarded as the most important tenets of the Moravian's teaching:

1. When a man has living faith in Christ, then he is justified:
2. This is always given in a moment;
3. And in that moment he has peace with God;
4. Which he cannot have without knowing that he has it:
5. And being born of God, he sinneth not:
6. Which deliverance from sin he cannot have without knowing that he has it (J.II,13-14).

There would be later alterations to these theses, but in the May of 1738, this is what Wesley had been led to believe. In his early reading of Jeremy Taylor he had criticized the seeming lack of reference to a present assurance of salvation and in later editions of Law's work he consistently excised elements of futurism or other-worldliness. The doctrine of assurance had always been present in his thought and now he was about to realize its meaning.

The events of May 24th need not be repeated in detail. There is no new change of theological position. The doctrinal discoveries had already been made and he had sought and found corroboration both in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Anglican

---

60. Cf. Charles Wesley's Journal, August 10th,1739. Recounting a visit to Law he writes of their conversation, "He agreed to our notion of faith, but would have it, that all men held it...I told him, he was my schoolmaster to bring me to Christ; but the reason why I did not come sooner to Him, was, my seeking to be sanctified before I was justified."(I,159.)

Reformers. He had been convinced of the true meaning of faith. This was a day of culmination when Wesley appropriated the grace of forgiveness and assurance which belong to faith. In his own words, his "doctrine" and "character" had become one (L.I,262).

It is not always realized that the long introduction to the events of May 24th and the account of the day itself which is found in the Journal is not so much a report as a reconstruction. It was written, possibly in the light of the experiences of two further years, and certainly, with a view to publication.[61] The central stirring moment at Aldersgate is described in language which is thoroughly restrained, if not cautious. The passive tense highlights a dynamic Christology. Luther's pro me is conceived, not futuristically but existentially. The famous account is best quoted from the original edition of the Journal Extract which reproduces Wesley's stresses:

> In the Evening I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a Quarter before nine, while he was describing the Change which God works in the Heart thro' Faith in Christ, I felt my Heart strangely warm'd. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for Salvation: And an Assurance was given me, That He had taken away my Sins, even mine, and saved me from the Law of Sin and Death.[62]

---

61. The preface to this Extract is dated September 29, 1740, and includes Wesley's current views and criticisms of Moravian doctrine. J.I,429-431.

62. J.I,475-476. The italicizing is that of the first edition, p.34. Charles Wesley's account reads, "Towards ten, my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, "I believe." We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer." Journal, I,95.

This event, the importance of which must not be under-emphasized, was neither the beginning nor end of Wesley's understanding of faith. The argument about the comparative value of the Aldersgate experience against the critical moments of 1725, 1729 or 1735 is partly, as has often been pointed out, an argument in the semantics of conversion.[63] And this argument can easily degenerate into a fruitless debate which Wesley, above all, would not have encouraged. He was not inclined to impose his experience as a definition. Rather, he allowed the details of this hour to slip from the record and went on to proclaim the grace which had grasped his whole being and which was to give inspiration and success to his ministry.

Wesley's Journal shows that in the days following May 24th he intended to incorporate into his former understanding of the claim of God's holy-love, his newly discovered doctrine of faith (J.I, 481-482). It is also not too much to claim that the events of that year had altered his scriptural principle. On June 4th he wrote:

> All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some "great and precious promise." And I saw more than ever that the gospel is in truth but one great promise, from the beginning of it to the end (J.I,482).

When moments of depression returned he found comfort in the scriptural teaching on "degrees of faith." (J.I,482). His decision to visit the Moravians in Germany is to be seen in this context. He hoped that they would help him "to go on from faith to faith." (J.I,483). But there is one other major document to be considered before we

---

63. The problem of definition continued. Cf. Wesley's letter to his brother, Samuel, of October 30th, 1738, where Wesley is at pains to define the word, "Christian!" L.I,262.

speak of the effects of this visit.

Eighteen days after Aldersgate Wesley preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, from the text, Ephesians 2:8 (S.1 -W.V,7-16; J.I,483-484,n.2). This sermon has sometimes been lauded as the trumpet call of the Evangelical Revival although it hardly warrants such a dramatic claim.[64] It is important, however, in that it reveals the content of Wesley's doctrine of salvation and, in particular, his new definition of faith.

The introduction to the sermon affirms the absolute primacy of God's grace in creation, providence, and redemption. Man has no claim upon this grace and no innate possibility of atoning for his sins. The image of God in man has been altogether corrupted and, therefore, having nothing to plead, "his mouth is utterly stopped before God." Grace must be the source of his salvation and faith the condition (1-3;pp.8-9). Christ and God through Christ are the proper objects of saving faith (i,4;9). This faith is distinguished from the natural theology of [illegible], ancient or modern, who can merely speak of "the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue." (i,1 and 4;8,9). It is also distinguished from the rationalist assent of a devil: "a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head." (i,4;9). Further it is to be distinguished from the faith of the disciples in the historical Jesus in that it acknowledges the necessity and redemptive merit of his death and the restorative power of his resurrection

---

64. Sugden maintained that this was not a new sermon, but was probably written in America. Standard Sermons I,36. There is no specific evidence for this although every important theological axiom can be found in Wesley's earlier writings.

(i,3,5;9). Having dismissed these alternatives which, doubtless, he felt to be represented in his learned audience, Wesley expands his own definition:

> Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation (i,5;9).

Salvation can be realized in the present life.[65] It includes the deliverance from original and actual sin, guilt and servile fear. It does not, however, exclude the believer from the possibility of falling from grace. Salvation, as an abiding in Christ, means that sin no longer reigns in the will and the man of faith is thereby saved from its power (ii,1-6;10,11).

Wesley's nomenclature needs some clarification when he goes on to give a comprehensive meaning to justification, including regeneration within this term. Taken in this broad sense he defines justification as,

> A deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ formed in his heart. So that he who is justified, or saved by faith, is indeed born again (ii,7;11-12).

The believer now goes from faith to faith, from grace to grace, unto perfection.

Because Wesley had defined faith as "recumbency" upon

---

65. "Whatsoever else it implies, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, Ye shall be (though that is also true,) but, "Ye are saved through faith." ii,1,10.

Christ, he knew that he must be responsible to the Anglican debate on this fiduciary definition. Such a formulation had been viewed with suspicion. The accentuation of sola fide, according to many a divine, could lead to the negation of good works, to making "void the law through faith." Wesley answered:

> It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these: But we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness (iii,1;12).[66]

In answer to all possible objections, including "the Romish delusions among us," and in spite of the fears of antinomianism, the doctrine of salvation by faith must be preached to all men. For it is, in the words of the Homily of the Church of England, "the strong rock, and foundation of the Christian religion." (iii,7-8; 14,15).[67]

The sermon concluded with a pertinent reminder that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone had always proved offensive, a fact which Luther had clearly recognized. But it is also true that the meek in Christ will conquer (iii,9;16).

From June 14th until mid-September Wesley travelled in Holland and Germany looking, as he said, for living proofs of the power of faith (J.II,13).[68] In his letters to his family

---

66. "These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which he hath appointed, do all the 'good works which he had before prepared that they should walk therein,' and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus." iii,2,12.

67. Homily of Salvation, Cranmer, Miscellaneous Writings,II,131.

68. The best account of this journey is Schmidt's, John Wesley, pp.273-303. His use of Herrnhut sources adds much to our knowledge of Moravian teaching. Cf. also Clifford W. Towlson, Moravian and Methodist (London: Epworth, 1957) chap. 4.

he showed how impressed he was by the way in which the Moravian Christians loved one another (L.I,250-252). He listened to the teaching of Zinzendorf and compared it with that of Böhler. The Count thought of justification and assurance as distinct moments in salvation (J.11,13), whereas Böhler and Spangenberg had taught him that justification involved necessarily the peace and joy of believing. Theologically, Zinzendorf was preserving the objective character of God's justifying deed, but his comparative flexibility on the matter of assurance would have helped Wesley who, after May 24th, was still harassed by his lack of joy (J.I, 476,479,482).

At Herrnhut he heard the testimonies to faith of the members of the community and also the profound Lutheran sermons of Christian David. These he transcribed with care (J.II,25-49). Christian David unknowingly described facets in the story of the Anglican tradition when he relayed the theological history of the Brethren which had fluctuated from antinomianism to pietism. He described their present position in these words:

> We have all chiefly insisted on Christ given for us: this we believe as the principle thing, which if we believe, Christ will surely be formed in us (J.II,36).[69]

The theologian, Arvid Gradin's description of the fullness of faith was of special interest to him and perhaps recalled to mind the calm witness of the Moravians during the voyage to Georgia:

> Repose in the blood of Christ. A firm confidence (firma fiducia) in God, and a persuasion of His favor; serene peace and steadfast tranquility of

---

69. Wesley later added, "I dare not say this is right." This addition is not in the early editions but appears as a note in Pine (1771) 26,324, without the negative, which is restored in the Errata to the volume.

> mind, with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and from every inward and outward sin. In a word, my heart, which before was tossed like a troubled sea, was still and quiet, and in a sweet calm (J.II,49).[70]

The testimonies were not always consistent in details but through the several witnesses Wesley was confirmed in his understanding of justification by faith alone as the gift of grace. Christian David had spoken directly to his past and to his present conviction:

> The right foundation is, not <u>your</u> contrition (though that is not your <u>own</u>), not <u>your</u> righteousness, nothing of <u>your own</u>, nothing that is wrought <u>in you</u> by the Holy Ghost; but it is something <u>without you</u>, viz. the righteousness and the blood of Christ...Labor then to believe with your whole heart. So shall you be cleansed from all sin. So shall ye go on from strength to strength, being renewed day by day in righteousness and all true holiness (J.II,27).

And this was the most important contribution the Moravians could have made.

There were moments when apparently Wesley could have stayed with the Herrnhuters (J.II,28), but his sense of churchmanship was very different from theirs and, in any case, he had a compelling sense of responsibility to his own Church and people. Later he would criticize and reject some of their teaching, but for a time the Moravians had been his fathers in the faith.

---

70. This definition, without the concluding testimony, is the only Moravian source included in <u>A Plain Account of Christian Perfection</u>. <u>Works</u>, XI, 369-370.

E. THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

In later years, John Wesley often maintained that the bases of his theology of salvation had been formulated before the Methodist Revival began.[71] In particular, his doctrines of predestination and justification and his view of Christian perfection received no major qualifications after 1738. Even his doctrine of assurance had been enunciated prior to that experience which had made it meaningful for him. There were to be developments and corrections in details; certain doctrines would be stressed either because of their having been neglected or for polemical reasons. But, in all, it can be said that the pattern and ingredients of Wesley's soteriology as established in 1738 persisted without significant alterations throughout his long ministry.

The words of Jeremy Taylor may be recalled:

> When the apostles by way of abbreviation, express all the body of Christian religion, they call it "faith working by love (Gal.5:6); "...Faith and repentance begin the Christian course. "Repent and believe the Gospel," was the sum of the apostle's sermons; and all the way after it is, "faith working by love." [72]

Wesley had acquired this pattern from the Anglican tradition of the seventeenth century and had confirmed it from a wide array of sources. In reaction to the prevailing natural theology he had decided upon the Scriptures as the supreme authority for the

---

71. J.VI,209 (Sept.1,1778); L.IV,295f,297-299, V,357f,363; W. V,4 (6), VII,317(18), XI,369(6); also letter to Melville Horne, Sugden, Standard Sermons,I,82. Cf. also Albert Outler, John Wesley,p.41,note 2, and Harald Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification (London: Epworth,1950),p.129.

72. Supra p.29f, note 56.

knowledge and service of God but, as he confessed, he read them according to the presuppositions of the moral theology which he had inherited.

By 1738, especially under the tutelage of the Moravians, he had come to recognize that the foundation of his practical divinity was hopelessly inadequate. His immediate theological inheritance was seriously called into question by his discovery of the meaning of faith, but when he turned back to the Reformation formularies of the Church of England he found that, after all, he had not claimed "a new doctrine." Further, his discoveries and revisions, as radical as they were, did not alter the design of his theology. He was still bent on "scriptural holiness," on faith working by love.

The most authentic way of reviewing Wesley's early period is to turn to his carefully edited autobiography which he wrote as a preface to the events of May 24th, 1738. Here it is most important to allow Wesley to speak for himself.[73]

As a child he had been taught that he could only be saved "by keeping all the commandments of God." Outward duties were clear, but he remembered little about inward holiness. Wesley's interim conclusion provides a structure for what follows:

> So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the Law, as I was of the Gospel of Christ.(1).

He had hoped to be saved by his good conduct, his regard for religion and his devotional performances, but during the early days at Oxford, still with no notion of inward holiness, he oscillated

---

73. J.I,465-472. The citations however have been taken from the first edition of the Extract (London:Strahan,1740) pp.27-34, and the capitalization and italics have been retained because they indicate significant emphases. References are to the sections of the preface and are common to both the original and the Curnock edition.

between sinning and repentance (2-3). At this time his father was urging him to enter Holy Orders and, in reading à Kempis, he began to see "that true religion was seated in the Heart, and that God's Law extended to all our Thoughts as well as Words and Actions." A "religious friend" also influenced him and he began "to set in earnest upon a New Life." Instead of receiving Communion three times a year, he communicated every week and, watching against all sins, he "began to aim at and pray for inward Holiness." His summary reads:

> So that now, doing so much, and living so good a Life, I doubted not but I was a good Christian (4).

He now had "a Scheme of Religion," and upon this he modelled his life. Then William Law's treatises convinced him, more than ever, of the magnitude of the "Law of God." Again his conclusion is important:

> And by my continued Endeavor to keep his whole Law, Inward and Outward, to the utmost of my Power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him, and that I was even then in a State of Salvation (5).

With his self-denial, social services, fasting and a faithful use of the means of grace, Wesley wondered what more he could do. Inward holiness, the Image of God, was his sole aim. Yet, at a time when he thought himself to be near death, he realized that his works gave him neither comfort nor "any Assurance of Acceptance with God."

> At this I was then not a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the Sand, nor considering that Other Foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid by God, even Jesus Christ (6).

Still he was persuaded that "Inward Holiness, or a Union of the Soul with God," was all that mattered. He was advised to lessen

his stress on outward works and to give himself to mental prayer. This direction, however, along with his former endeavors comprised a "refined Way of trusting to my own Works and my own Righteousness (so zealously inculcated by the Mystic writers) (7-8)."[74]

On his voyage to Georgia he met the Moravians who attempted to show him "a more excellent way," but at first he was "too learned and too wise" to understand them (8).

> All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the Air. Being ignorant of the Righteousness of Christ, which by a living Faith in Him bringeth Salvation to everyone that believeth...I was now, properly under the Law; I knew that the Law of God was Spiritual: I consented to it, that it was Good Yea, I delighted in it, after the inner Man. Yet was I carnal, sold under Sin (9).

So he struggled between "Nature and Grace," between "the Terrors of the Law" and "the Comforts of the Gospel." There were now, however, anticipations of the meaning of faith but still he confesses to have been "under the Law, not under Grace."

> I was only striving with, not Freed from Sin: Neither had I The Witness of the Spirit with my spirit. And indeed could not; for I sought it not by Faith, (but as it were) by the Works of the Law (10).

Upon his return to England he was convinced that the cause of his fear of death, which again seemed to be casting its shadow, was his unbelief. "The gaining a true, living Faith was the One Thing needful for me." But he had not yet comprehended the

---

74. In the first edition (1740) there is a denunciation of the mystic writers which was elided from all editions after 1765. It reads,"...the Mystic Writers, whom I declare in my cool Judgment, and in the Presence of the most High God, I believe to be one Great Antichrist." pp.30-31. Outler notes this passage, but attributes it to the second edition (1743), op.cit., p.63, note 18.

object of faith. "I meant only Faith in God, not Faith in or through Christ." It was at this stage that Peter Böhler's witness was crucial. Böhler affirmed that faith in Christ meant a "dominion over Sin, and constant Peace from a Sense of Forgiveness." Wesley's reaction is recorded in these words:

> I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a New Gospel. If this was so, it was clear, I had not Faith.

In his own education he had been taught to construe away the idea that a sense of forgiveness belonged to faith; only "Presbyterians" held such a doctrine. Yet he was now convinced that faith did bring forgiveness and assurance and, equally, that he had been living with a pretension (11).

The remainder of the story has been told, but Wesley's final summary to this preface serves to crystallize his new orientation:

> I was now thoroughly convinced. And, by the grace of God I resolved to seek it unto the End. 1. By absolutely renouncing all Dependence, in whole or in Part, upon my own Works or Righteousness, on which I had really grounded my Hope of Salvation, though I knew it not, from my Youth up. 2. By adding to the constant Use of all the other Means of Grace, continual Prayer for this very Thing, Justifying, Saving Faith, a full Reliance on the Blood of Christ shed for me; a Trust in Him as my Christ, as my sole Justification, Sanctification and Redemption (12).

An evaluation of this early period involves the question, "What was new in Wesley's understanding of faith?" Why did he think he had discovered "a new gospel?" The answer lies in the fact that Wesley had not received this understanding from the immediate tradition in which he had been educated or from those literary sources which had nourished his development.

In the first part of this work, it was shown how Restoration

Anglicanism, in a critical period of reconstruction, had not paid sufficient attention to the mystery of faith, and this for several reasons. The solifidian doctrine of the Reformers and the fiduciary character of the faith which they had proclaimed were, in fact, criticized and generally discarded. These doctrines had become identified with Calvinist predestinarianism and also with antinomianism, both logical and actual.[75] The fiduciary doctrine had given rise to what Isaac Barrow called "words of metaphor and mystery." According to Barrow, the Puritan, William Ames, had defined faith by using such metaphors as, "recumbency, leaning, resting, relling upon, adherency to, an apprehending and applying to ourselves the righteousness of Christ." Barrow spoke for an age when he denounced these as non-scriptural and vulgar attempts to describe a trust in Christ as the author of salvation.[76] Further, the demand for reasonableness, which belonged to this age and which affected the Church's apologetic, meant that the gift-character of faith was subsumed in the process of making the faith intellectually defensible. To speak of saving faith as being wrought by the Spirit simply implied pretension and enthusiasm. Faith was an assent, upon proper evidence, to the being and beneficence of God and to his commandments which were eminently reasonable.

---

75. Cf. supra. pp.30,56f and notes 57,107 for references to criticisms by Hammond and Bull. Hammond clearly associated these doctrines with the further assertions, "Of Christ's dying for none but the elect," and "Of the Irrespective Decrees of Election and Reprobation." Miscellaneous Theological Works, II,133-140,140-145.

76. Sermon, "Of Justifying Faith," Theological Works, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon,1818), IV,112,114. Cf. also a sermon by Tillotson with the same title, Sermons, 14 vols., XII,261-263. Tillotson collected the works of Barrow and was obviously influenced by his thought at this point.

The moral theologians further believed that these imported solifidian and fiduciary opinions obstructed the good life; they separated the inseparable -faith and obedience. If sola fide meant a "bare faith" by which a man thought himself to be justified, then such a doctrine had been condemned, once and for all, by St. James. Article XIII safeguarded the notion that works, prior to justification, could not be pronounced "good," but true faith, according to the preceding Article, was necessarily "lively" and full of good works. Wesley paraphrased the issues involved when, in a review which was attached to the Journal entry for January 24th, 1738, he wrote:

> I was early warned against laying, as the Papists do, too much stress on outward works, or on a faith without works; which, as it does not include, so it will never lead to, true hope or charity. Nor am I sensible that to this hour I have laid too much stress on either; having from the very beginning valued both faith, and the means of grace, and good works, not on their own account, but as believing God, who had appointed them, would by them bring me in due time to the mind that was in Christ (J.I,419).

The Caroline Divines, the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians, all took part in a reaction to confessional rigidities. Positively they moved behind the period of disputes and sought to preserve the moral intention of the teleios of the early Fathers. The proximity of the Primitive Church to scriptural simplicity and to the rule of faith belied the elaborate and rationalist opinions of the sectarians. The concentration was upon "the divine life," and so upon "practical divinity." The unum necessarium was a life of holiness. For the Restoration theologians, the reasonableness of this life followed from an awareness of the imitable perfections which "right reason" had intuited. The grace of God was the sine qua non for Christian living and

was to be embraced through those means which had been divinely ordained for the Church. The pattern of Christ's life was the model for obedience unto perfection, to the restoration of the image of God in man.

The various literary sources which Wesley studied tended to support these formulations. Yet there were two major issues which were seldom clarified - the meaning of the work of Christ and, subsequently, the meaning of faith itself. The theology of restoration or recapitulation found the motif of imitatio Christi congenial to a point of necessity and it was customary to speak of Christ as the grand Exemplar. However, few of Wesley's sources, the exceptions were the writings of Scougal and Norris, paid specific attention to the mediatorial office of Christ. Henry Scougal's description of the divine life as having faith as its root and love as its branches, and his definition of faith as a "feeling persuasion of spiritual things," with special reference to Jesus as Mediator, as orthodox as this may sound, was nevertheless an uncommon note in the literature which Wesley had pondered. William Law was made of sterner stuff than most of the men of Latitude and his practical treatises call for more than a eudomonistic ethic. Yet Wesley's correspondence with him reveals his deep dissatisfaction, not only of Law's premises, but with the general inadequacy of Anglican piety which the Non-juror represented.

Anglicanism had once incorporated into its Homilies and Articles the Reformation doctrine of justification by grace, propter meritum Christi, per fidem. The question which had to be put to the Latitudinarians was whether they were being respon-

sible, beyond lip-service, to this heritage. Their moral theology, in emphasizing the unity and harmony of the divine design, could by-pass the discontinuity of faith. Further it was apparent that a soteriology which did not center upon the meaning of Christ for faith could only proclaim the way of holiness as a demand, a way under the law.

This was the direction which Wesley had followed. The preface to the events of May 24th was deliberately structured to show the development of his devotion to outward and then inward holiness. This became his supreme quest. In later years, he related how his doctrine of Christian perfection was formulated (one might say, acquired) in his early period and his letters and sermons have shown this to have been the case. At the beginning of 1734 he defined religion in the terms he had assumed from the tradition:

> I take religion to be, not the bare saying over so many prayers;...not anything super-added now and then to a careless or worldly life; but a constant ruling habit of soul, a renewal of our minds in the image of God, a recovery of the divine likeness, a still-increasing conformity of heart and life to the pattern of our most holy Redeemer (L.I,152).

The Word of God declared "that without doing good as well as avoiding evil shall no flesh living be justified." So his salvation depended, primarily, upon his keeping of the commandments (L.I,160; J.I,419). This was the first word he heard from the Scriptures. That is, he had made a firm resolution in the contemporary debate between reason and revelation, and he read the Bible with a presupposition as to the lawful necessity of holiness according to the pattern of Christ (W.XI,367,5).

His early writings specify even more clearly the context in which he pursued his goal. The recurring emphasis upon the Law of

God is impossible to ignore. In choosing the words of Romans 9: 30-32 as a text for the first part of the Journal, Wesley was providing the critical clue to this period (J.I,81).[77] He had conceived of the way of holiness as a demand. It is this description which marks both the orientation of his early theology as well as its limitation. The divine design was construed as law. If, in his letters to William Law, Wesley had used his borrowed Moravian terminology too enthusiastically, the basis of his despair and criticism was valid. He had learned little about "Christ our atonement." With all the emphasis which had been placed upon the righteousness of the new man, there had been little said of the prior righteousness of Christ.

The discovery of 1738 was a discovery of the meaning of Christ for faith. Jesus Christ was not simply a paradigm for imitation or the object of mystical experience. He was the <u>prōtos</u> and <u>eschatos</u> of faith. The Christian's life in the world celebrates his death and his triumph. Present forgiveness flowed from God's acceptance of the merits of Christ's death and present assurance was the witness of the Spirit to his resurrection. Faith was centered upon Christ alone. This was the "new doctrine" which Wesley claimed.

In the Oxford sermon of June 1738, he interpreted the given theological situation and then proceeded to revise his inherited

---

77. "What shall we say then? - That Israel which followed after the Law of Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness. -Wherefore? Because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law." It is interesting to compare the text of the second extract, I Timothy 1:16 (J.I,427).

concept of faith, point by point. Putting aside all reserve about solifidian and fiduciary implications, using metaphors which had been condemned, and even risking charges of enthusiasm and antinomianism he proclaimed his definition:

> Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation (S.1,i,5-W.V,9).

In the light of his immediate inheritance, it was natural for Wesley to have spoken of this as a "new doctrine." But in fact, Wesley was revising the Restoration definition of faith on the basis of the teaching of the English Reformers. He was reiterating precisely that expression of faith which was normative for the Church of England.[78] There is an illuminating passage in Charles Wesley's Journal, dated May 17th, 1738, which supports this analysis.

---

78. So Cranmer, "For the right and true Christian faith is, not only to believe that holy scripture and all the aforesaid articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ." (Of Salvation,III). Miscellaneous Writings II, 133.
cf. "Of the True, Lively, and Christian Faith," I, Ibid., II, 136. In this Homily, faith is defined fiducially, "...if we trust in him, and commit ourselves wholly to him, hang only upon him, and call upon him, ready to serve and obey him." pp.135-136.
J.I.Packer, in an introduction to the work of Cranmer has this comment, "To expound justification by faith in a way that leads to piety without pietism and assurance without antinomianism is never easy, and the necessity of speaking to a situation in which men's minds were possessed with a truncated idea of faith as mere credence, and a firm belief that its whole significance in salvation was as a meritorious work, could only make the task harder. But Cranmer proved equal to its demands." The Work of Thomas Cranmer, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics (Appleford, Berkshire, Sutton Courtenay, 1964), p.xxiv. This was precisely Wesley's situation in 1738 and it may be said that he too proved equal to its demands.

Charles had been reading Luther on Galatians and comments:

> Who would believe our Church had been founded on this important article of justification by faith alone? I am astonished I should ever think this a new doctrine; especially while our Articles and Homilies stand unrepealed, and the key of knowledge is not yet taken away. 79

---

79. I, 88 cf. John Wesley's Journal, I,456 note 2. John Wesley had read and expounded the Homilies prior to this date (J.I,394,395), and before the end of 1738 he had edited the three Homilies, "Of Salvation," "Of Faith," and "Of Good Works." Green Bibliography no. 9, but compare Outler who has revised Green's dating as well as the substance of Curnock's note, J.II,101. The small work ran into at least nineteen editions during Wesley's lifetime but, as Outler points out, his subsequent editors "quietly dropped it from their editions." op.cit. p. 121 and notes. The present writer would add that Wesleyan historiography has suffered accordingly. On this matter it is necessary to take issue with George Croft Cell's claim that, "Martin Luther is known to be, along with his (Wesley's) own independent inquiries into the Word of God, the only authority other than Scripture, that Wesley ever acknowledged for his understanding of Justification by Faith." The Rediscovery of John Wesley (New York: Holt, 1935) p.199, cf. 153. This is a major premise for Cell's discussion which must be pronounced erroneous and also fundamentally misleading. Allowing for the real influence of both Wittenberg and Geneva on the Anglican formularies, the Anglican Divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries drew a firm distinction between the Continental and English Reformers. When Wesley wrote to "John Smith," "It is the faith of our first Reformers which I by the grace of God preach," it is unlikely, as Cell maintained, that he was identifying with Luther and Calvin (p.28). Cell's comment is surprising in as much as he thought that Wesley was writing to Bishop Secker of Oxford! Although this identification is now questioned and in fact rejected by Dr. Frank Baker (personal conversation), the whole context of Wesley's letters to "John Smith" is, as Cell did not note, the Anglican tradition. The passage which Cell abbreviated actually reads, "My father did not die unacquainted with the faith of the gospel, of the primitive Christians, or of our first Reformers; the same which, by the grace of God, I preach, and which is just as new as Christianity." L.II,134, cf. also 50,57. When Wesley lists "our great Reformers," he cites Bonner, Gardiner, Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer. Works VIII, 207-208, also for the distinction, p.242. In his 1741 Oxford sermon, "Awake, Thou that sleepest," Charles Wesley spoke of returning "to the principles of the Reformation," and here again he is referring back to a section of the sermon in which he spoke of "our own excellent Church of England." Works V, 36,34, iii, 13,9.

John Wesley now saw everything in a new light. Justification by faith in Christ was the doctrine of the Church, but it was also the doctrine of the Bible (W.VIII,349,10). His discovery radically altered the hermeneutical principle which had centered on the divine imperative. The Journal entry for June 4th, 1738, reveals this change:

> All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some great and precious Promise. And I saw more than ever, that the Gospel is in Truth, but one great Promise, from the Beginning of it to the End (J.I,482).

In Scripture, he had at last heard the sound of the Gospel and had understood the biblical order. Faith was no longer to be reckoned among the commandments. Christ was the author and finisher of faith and with this truth and promise, realized as forgiveness and assurance, he was now free to fulfill Christ's law of love.

We may now turn to the final question which relates to the effect which Wesley's concept of faith had upon the pattern of his theology. It has been shown that his indebtedness to the Anglican tradition of the seventeenth century was most apparent in his accounts of salvation in terms of the renewal of the divine image and the restoration of the believer to that holiness and happiness which characterized his primal innocence. Through repentance, faith and obedience the end would be as the beginning. In this sense Christianity was "as old as creation." The whole context of Wesley's doctrine of perfection was a doctrine of creation which had proved generally acceptable to the natural theologians, and which stressed a correlation between the divine perfections and the divine law.

In his early preaching Wesley showed that he was reacting

to the Restoration synthesis. He criticized that moral theology which was grounded upon the imitable perfections of God or upon "the eternal fitness of things." In opposition to the implicit monism and ethical idealism which had simply encouraged Deism, Wesley sought for a scriptural foundation for his doctrine of holiness. But in this search he did not discard the motifs which he had inherited. As has been shown they tended to inform his scriptural principle. He had been thoroughly taught that obedience, under grace, was the unum necessarium. He believed further that this was the divine design for all men. This had precluded the Calvinist doctrine of election. Guided by his mother, who, at this point, was thoroughly representative of Restoration Anglicanism, he had affirmed his allegiance to the doctrine of the universal love of God and of his willingness to save all men. Although the predestinarian issue did not assume importance until 1739, these motifs remained intact and functioned presuppositionally in his thought and teaching.

During 1738, however, Wesley had decided that "the one thing necessary" was not, firstly, holiness, but faith (J.I,471,11). In 1740, in reviewing his pilgrimage from nature to grace, he wrote of his new orientation:

> After we had wandered many years in the new path of salvation by faith and works, about two years ago it pleased God to show us the old way of salvation by faith only (J.II,354).

Wesley is here speaking, of course, of the order of justification and is re-emphasizing that he had returned to "the strong rock and foundation" of the Reformers. What then of holiness, of perfect love? What of his dominating concern for sanctification? It seems that for a time it was obscured, one might say naturally,

by the radicalness of his discovery of the meaning of faith. But it was soon retrieved. In the Oxford sermon of June 1738, with all its emphasis upon justification by faith alone, Wesley was at pains to show that he was not preaching against holiness and good works (S.I,iii,1-4 -W.V,12-14).[80] Charles Wesley also, in the midst of the excitement of the month of May, showed that the pattern had not been left behind. Following his remark on the doctrine of justification in Luther and the Homilies, he wrote in the very next paragraph:

> From this time I endeavored to ground as many of our friends as came in this fundamental truth, salvation by faith alone, not an idle, dead faith, but a faith which works by love, and is necessarily productive of all good works and all holiness.[81]

If the doctrine of *sola fide* meant a faith barren of good works, the Wesleys would reject solifidianism, in this sense, as surely as their forebears, and indeed the Homily, had done.[82]

Wesley shared the traditional dread of antinomianism but he insisted that the Christocentric doctrine of faith, as held by the Reformers and made explicit in the Anglican formularies, be re-incorporated into the eighteenth century theology of salvation.

---

80. The sensitivity of some contemporary divines to the *sola fide* doctrine is apparent in Wesley's being branded an antinomian. In November, 1738, Charles Wesley had an interview with the Bishop of London. The conversation shows the viable alternatives which we have considered, "He...blamed my brother's sermon, as inclining to Antinomianism. I charged Archbishop Tillotson with denying the faith. He allowed it, and owned they ran into one extreme to avoid another." Charles Wesley's *Journal*, I,136.

81. *Ibid.*, I, 88.

82. Cf. the Homily, "Of Good Works annexed to Faith." Cranmer, *Writings*, II,141-149.

Only by faith in Christ's atonement could man, in his sin, be justified before the holy God. That, as Wesley said, was the beginning (J.I,430,7). Only with this fiduciary faith would man also be sanctified. "Salvation" was Wesley's comprehensive word for these two moments of justification and sanctification, but they depend equally and solely upon the merit of Christ's death. Once faith in Christ had been defined, then the Christian way could be described, indeed must be described, as the way of faith working through love to that end which is perfect love.

Wesley's conception of faith now informed and vitalized his self-understanding, his notions of happiness and holiness, his designs, desires, conversation and actions (J.II,89-91). But holiness is still for him,

> The life of God in the soul; the image of God fresh stamped on the heart; the entire renewal of the mind in every temper and thought, after the likeness of Him that created it (J.II,90). [83]

So the thrust of Wesley's theology continued to be toward perfection as the <u>telos</u> of the Christian life. But he had now realized the foundation for such a life. In January of 1738 he had translated the words of Gerhardt:

> O grant that nothing in my soul
> May dwell but Thy <u>pure love alone</u>!
> O may Thy love <u>possess me whole</u>,
> My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
> Strange flames far from my heart remove!
> My <u>every</u> act, word, thought, be love.

And in later years he commented on these lines, "And I am persuaded that is what the Lord Jesus hath bought for me with His own blood" (L.IV,299). With this "true faith" he was set free for the goal of perfection which was no longer demand or burden but promise and permission.

---

83. Cf. J. II,115-116.

So the formulation of the nature and end of the Christian life had not altered with the passing of the Oxford and Georgia years, but his understanding of the source, and hence the beginning of salvation, had changed completely. Wesley retained the conception of God's design for holiness which had been the strongest motif of Anglican piety, but moved by the Moravians, inspired by Luther, and, above all, supported by the Homilies and Articles of his own tradition, he was led to reinsert the Christological doctrine of faith into the order of salvation. In this he reaffirmed for the Anglican tradition the critical truth about God and man which his immediate inheritance had discarded. Now, with this definition, he could say with Jeremy Taylor, "all the way after it is, 'faith working by love.'"

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to establish the theological context in which Wesley's thought was nurtured, to trace the developing expressions of his theology from 1725 until 1738, and to show how his sense of the divine design of salvation was reformed by a new understanding of the nature of faith.

A brief examination of the Anglican tradition, especially in the period of the Restoration, and a review of some of the influences and texts which proved of importance to Wesley, provided a perspective for this analysis of his early formulations of belief and also for his utterances of despair concerning his ministry.

Wesley's doctrinal position had been shaped by an overmastering zeal for holiness; a zeal which derived, in large measure, from the idea of perfection which he had learned from the ascetics and mystics of the past and most clearly from William Law. In his early years as a student, tutor and missionary, perfection was both the form and the content of his religion, the means as well as the end of the divine design. But this perfection meant a subjugation to the moral law. With sensitive dedication, Wesley strove to keep that law by disciplined love until, burdened with the sheer impossibility of such a quest, he turned to those who had received the assurance of faith and, through their testimonies, heard the sound and realized the promise of the gospel.

It was the Moravians who had relayed this new understanding to Wesley, but it is apparent that he immediately sought and

found support for the fiduciary doctrine in the formularies of his own Church of England. In fact, in later years, he could omit all reference to Moravian influence and claim that he was first convinced of the evangelical truth "by carefully reading the New Testament and the Homilies."[1]

The analysis of Wesley's Anglican heritage showed clearly why he believed that he had discovered a "new doctrine." The Reformation had, of course, left its indelible mark on the formularies of the Church of England, but the vicissitudes of the next two centuries, both ecclesiastical and ideological, tended to obscure the achievement of the Reformers. A new age had intervened. The Restoration Church was anxious, on the one hand, to forget the odium theologicum which had proved so destructive to her history and, on the other, to be responsible to the claims of the age of reason. Positively her divines attempted to conserve the simplicity of the depositum fidei against what appeared to be the illegitimate rationalizing of the several confessional bodies. More important, as it seemed, was their desire to maintain their tradition of "practical divinity" and to affirm "the beauty of holiness." The theology of piety was not only attuned to the reasonableness of the age but it actively countered those forms of antinomianism which had stemmed from certain imbalances in the sectarian expositions.

Yet in this desire to keep to the via media, the latitudinarians became absorbed with the naturalism of the time. Their doctrine was characterized by a Christological vacuity, at once

---

1. Letters IV, 173-174, cf. 28; III,321(39).

explicable, but which called into question the whole basis of their moral theology. The meaning of Christ for faith, and of faith for holiness, which had been the considered order of the Homilies on Salvation as well as of the Articles, was well-nigh forgotten.

When in June 1738, John Wesley mounted the pulpit of St. Mary's to preach on "Salvation by Faith," he deliberately enunciated this order and defined this faith in the words of the Reformation. R. Ernest Ker spoke of this in terms which were hardly exaggerated:

> How reminiscent all this is of the great days of the sixteenth century! It is the Reformation breaking out once more, by a kind of delayed action. Wesley's voice, preaching at St. Mary's in Oxford with an emphasis unfamiliar then, was the theological successor to Cranmer's voice, which had spoken earlier and to the same effect in the same place. [2]

It is important, however, to notice that the events of 1738 did nothing to alter Wesley's intention toward holiness or perfect love. The end of salvation remains the same, "only it stands on another foundation."[3] Salvation entails a "lively faith"; faith as trust in Christ and as informing a life of love. That was the irreversible order. Faith and love are "inseparably connected" as the gifts of divine grace.[4]

> Every moment, Lord, I need,
> The merit of Thy death.

---

2. "John Wesley and the Church of England." Biblical Theology, Vol.9,No.4,1959. Cf. Wesley's remark to an Anglican priest in 1750, "The truth is, the old doctrines of the Reformation are now quite new in the world. Hence those who revive them cannot fail to be opposed by those of the clergy who know them not." Letters III,291(3).

3. Works, VII, 230(14).

4. Works, VI, 36-37(8).

A summary in the Large Minutes shows that the direction of his soteriology had not changed:

> In 1729, two young men, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others to do so. In 1737 they saw holiness comes by faith. They saw likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their point. [5]

The design of Wesley's doctrine was complete; salvation as holy love stood upon the foundation of faith alone.

A continued examination of the relation of faith and love in Wesley's mature writings would consist in a detailed exegesis of his words, "We are justified by faith alone, and yet by a faith as is not alone...none are finally saved but those whose faith worketh by love."[6] It would also analyze his attempts to preserve the precarious doctrinal balance implicit in that statement. We shall not anticipate Wesley's handling of the "fundamental doctrines" which are assumed in this formula, or begin to describe the theological problems which he encountered both in proclamation and defense. Much of this work has in fact been done as scholars have scrutinized his ordo salutis in detail. Yet, it must be said, that to a large extent, this work has been carried on in an un-historical, if not anti-historical, fashion. We have been content to listen simply and over-literally to what Wesley said rather than search for his perspectives and view his work in dialogue with the creative minds and issues of his time. In pursuing the main theme of this present project,

---

5. Works, VIII,300 (A.4), Cf. VII,229-230(13-15).

6. Letters, IV, 175(3,2).

we have arrived at an obvious truism: to understand simply what Wesley wrote is simply not to understand Wesley. His early theology was not manufactured or given *in vacuo*. It can only be properly understood as corroborating or criticising a confluence of inherited and contemporary thought.

Implicit in the evolution of Wesley's doctrine of salvation were principles which revealed his position on some of the crucial methodological questions with which churchmen were wrestling. The most important of these were: a decision for revealed religion which marked the beginning of his doctrine of the knowledge of God, the adoption of a hermeneutical principle which, in its revised form, constituted an affirmation of faithful-holiness, and, finally, a return to the doctrinal context of the English Reformers. If such is the case, a study of the details of Wesley's mature soteriology cannot rest content with an ordered recital of the several doctrines, but must examine the correlative significance of these procedural decisions. Such a bald statement of suggested directions is open to the criticism that we are making of Wesley, "a modern man." The answer may be that the pedestalled Wesley of literal piety bears only a slight resemblance to that eighteenth-century Nehemiah who was ever bent on conserving and defending the deposit of the Church's faith in contemporary terms while urging Methodism on to greater devotion and service. An investigation of his theory of knowledge, of his principles of interpretation, and of the Anglican Reformation character of his doctrine of salvation, would allow him to move as freely within his own century as he himself chose to move.

If we are true to the witness of John Wesley, such an

account would not obscure the continuing meaning of the events of 1738: the discovery epitomized in the lines of his brother's poem, Wrestling Jacob,

> My Prayer hath Power with GOD; the Grace
> Unspeakable I now receive,
> Thro' Faith I see Thee Face to Face,
> I see Thee Face to Face and live:
> In vain I have not wept and strove,
> Thy Nature and Thy Name is LOVE.

Wesley had much more to say in the succeeding half-century; yet, as he knew well, there was nothing more to say than "grace unspeakable."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following bibliography, in sections A - E, is limited to works quoted or referred to in the text or in the notes of this study. In section F appear some other works which have been consulted in the course of research. A number of titles, especially of seventeenth and eighteenth-century volumes, have been quoted in the shortest form.

Outline:

A. Background to Eighteenth-Century Religious Thought.

i. Primary Sources.
ii. Secondary Sources.

B. The Works of John Wesley.

i. Bibliographies.
ii. Works of John Wesley.

C. The Writings of other members of the Wesley Family.

D. Secondary Sources on John Wesley's Life and Thought.

E. Other Works Cited.

F. Other Works Consulted.

.....

A. BACKGROUND TO EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

i. Primary Sources

Barrow, Isaac, Theological Works. 6 vols.; Oxford:Clarendon,1818.

Beveridge, William, The Theological Works of William Beveridge. Oxford:Parker 1842-1848.

The Book of Common Prayer. Oxford University Press.

Boyle, Robert, Some Considerations on the Style of The Holy Scriptures, rendered into Modern Language by the Rev. P.Panter. London:Rivington,1825.

Bull, George, Some Important Points of Primitive Christianity. Oxford:Baxter,1816.

Cave, William, Primitive Christianity: or, The Religion of the Ancient Christians in the First Ages of the Gospel. London:Chiswell,1673.

Clarke, Samuel, "A Discourse concerning the unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation," A Collection of Theological Tracts. ed. Richard Watson; Vol. IV; London:Nichols,1785.

Clarke, Samuel, The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence. ed. H.G. Alexander. Manchester,1956.

Cranmer, Thomas, Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer. Parker Society ed.; 2 vols.; Cambridge,1844-46.

Cranmer, Thomas, The Works of Thomas Cranmer. intro. J.I. Packer;Appleford,Berkshire,Sutton Courtenay,1964.

Cudworth, Ralph, A Sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons at Westminster, March 31st,1647. Cambridge:Daniel,1647; New York, Facsimile Text,1930.

Glanvill, Joseph, The Vanity of Dogmatizing: or Confidence in Opinions. London:Everden,1661.

Hammond, Henry, The Miscellaneous Theological Works. Parker ed.; 4 vols.; Oxford,1847-1850.

Haywood, Thomas, Primitive Morality. Or, The Spiritual Homilies of St.Macarius the Egyptian. London, 1721.

Hooker, Richard, The Works of Richard Hooker. John Keble ed.; 3 vols.; Oxford,1836.

Johnson, Samuel, A Dictionary of the English Language. 4 vols.; Philadelphia:Thomas,1818.

Law, William, A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection. 2nd ed.; London:Innys,1728.

Law, William, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. 20th ed.; Romsey:Sharp,1816.

Locke, John, The Works of John Locke. 10th ed.; 10 vols.; London,1801.

More, Paul Elmer, and Cross, Frank Leslie, eds. Anglicanism; The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century. London: S.P.C.K.,1962.

Norris, John, Cursory Reflections upon a Book call'd, An Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690), ed. Gilbert McEwen. The Augustan Reprint Society Pub.93.; Los Angeles:Clark Memorial Library,1961.

Pearson, John, An Exposition of the Creed. 2 vols.; Oxford, 1833.

Pope, Alexander, "An Essay on Man," The Poems of Alexander Pope, Twickenham Ed.,vol.III.i; London:Methuen, 1951.

Scougal, Henry, The Life of God in the Soul of Man: or The Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion. ed. Cockburn; London:Downing and Strahan, 1726.

Smith, John, Select Discourses. 3rd ed.; London:Rivington, 1821.

Sprat, Thomas, History of the Royal Society. London:Martyn, 1667; St.Louis:Washington University Studies,1959.

Taylor, Jeremy, The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor. 10 vols.; Heber-Eden ed.; London,1849-1852.

Tillotson, John, Sermons. ed. Barker.; 14 vols.; London: Chiswell,1700-1704.

Tillotson, John, The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson. 10 vols.; Edinburgh:Ruddiman, Murray and Cochran, 1772.

Tilly, William, Sixteen Sermons, All (except One) Preach'd before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, upon Several Occasions. London:Lintott,1712.

Tindal, Frith and Barnes, Writings of. London:The Religious Tract Society, n.d..

Watts, Isaac, The Works of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D. 9 vols.; London,1812-1813.

Whiston, William, Primitive Christianity Revived. Vols.I-III; London,1711.

ii. Secondary Sources.

Baker, Eric W., A Herald of the Evangelical Revival. London: Epworth,1948.

Bethell, S.L., The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century. London:Dobson, 1951.

Bromiley, G.W., Thomas Cranmer Theologian. New York: Oxford, 1956.

Burtt, Edwin, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science. London:Paul,Trench,Truber,1932.

Carpenter, S.C., Eighteenth Century Church and People. London: Murray,1959.

Carré, Meyrick, Phases of Thought in England. Oxford,1949.

Cassirer, Ernst, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James Pettegrove. Austin:University of Texas, 1953.

Collingwood, R.G., The Idea of Nature. Oxford,1960.

Cragg, Gerald, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason. Cambridge, 1950.

Cragg, Gerald, Puritanism in the Age of the Great Persecution. Cambridge,1957.

Crane, R.S., "Anglican Apologetics and the Idea of Progress, 1699-1745," Modern Philology,31 (1933-34), 273-306, 349-382.

Davis, Arthur Paul, Isaac Watts, His Life and Works. London: Independent,1948.

De Pauley, W.C., The Candle of the Lord. London: S.P.C.K., 1937.

Dillenberger, John, Protestant Thought and Natural Science. New York:Doubleday,1960.

Green, William, John Wesley and William Law. London:Epworth, 1945.

Hobhouse, Stephen, William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism. London: Allen and Unwin, 1927.

Hoopes, Robert, Right Reason in the English Renaissance. Harvard,1962.

Hopkinson, Arthur W., About William Law. London:S.P.C.K., 1948.

Huens, Gertrude, Antinomianism in English History. London: Cresset,1951.

Hughes, H. Trevor, "Jeremy Taylor and John Wesley," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 174 (1949), 296-304.

Hughes, H. Trevor, The Piety of Jeremy Taylor. London: Macmillan,1960.

Hunt, John, Religious Thought in England. 3 vols.; London: Strahan,1870-1873.

Hunter, William B., "The Seventeenth-Century Doctrine of Plastic Nature," Harvard Theological Review, XLIII (1950), 197-213.

Knox, Alexander, Remains. 4 vols. London:Duncan and Malcolm, 1844.

Kristeller, Paul O., Facets of the Renaissance. Los Angeles: University of Southern California,1959.

Krumm, John M., "Continental Protestantism and Elizabethan Anglicanism," Reformation Studies in Honor of Roland H. Bainton, ed. Franklin Littell. Richmond: Knox,1962.

Lichtenstein, Aharon, Henry More, The Rational Theology of a Cambridge Platonist. Massachusetts:Harvard,1962.

Locke, Louis G., Tillotson, A Study in Seventeenth Century Literature. Copenhagen:Rosenkilde and Bagger,1954.

Lovejoy, Arthur O., The Great Chain of Being, A Study in the History of an Idea. New York:Harper,1960.

McAdoo, H.R., The Spirit of Anglicanism. New York:Scribners, 1965.

McAdoo, H.A., The Structure of Caroline Moral Theology. London:Longmans,1949.

Merton, R.K., "Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," Osiris, Vol.IV (1938), 360-632.

Muirhead, John H., The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy. New York:Macmillan,1931.

Overton, J.H., William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic. London: Longmans,1881.

Parker, T.M., "Arminianism and Laudianism in Seventeenth Century England," Studies in Church History, eds. Dugmore and Duggan. London:Nelson,1964.

Passmore, J.A., Ralph Cudworth. Cambridge,1951.

Pawson, G.P.H., The Cambridge Platonists and Their Place in Religious Thought. London: S.P.C.K.,1930.

Porter, H.C., Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge. Cambridge,1958.

Powicke, F.J., The Cambridge Platonists. London:Dent,1924.

Raven, Charles E., Natural Religion and Christian Theology. 2 vols.; Cambridge,1953.

Raven, Charles E., Science, Religion and the Future. Cambridge, 1943.

Stranks, C.J., The Life and Writings of Jeremy Taylor. London: S.P.C.K., 1952.

Stromberg, Roland N., Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England. London:Oxford,1954.

Sykes, Norman, Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century. Connecticut: Archon,1962.

Sykes, Norman, William Wake, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1657-1737. 2 vols. Cambridge,1957.

Tulloch, John, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century. 2 vols.; Edinburgh:Blackwood,1874.

Westfall, R.S., Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England. New Haven:Yale,1958.

Whiting, C.E., Studies in English Puritanism from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1600-1688. London: S.P.C.K., 1931.

Wiley, Margaret L., The Subtle Knot, Creative Scepticism in Seventeenth-Century England. London: Allen and Unwin,1952.

Willey, Basil, The Eighteenth Century Background. Boston: Beacon,1961.

Wood, Thomas, English Casuistical Divinity during the Seventeenth Century. London: S.P.C.K.,1952.

B. THE WORKS OF JOHN WESLEY

i. Bibliographies.

Baker, Frank, ed. A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley. MSS. 1966.

Green, Richard, The Works of John and Charles Wesley. A Bibliography. London:Kelly,1896.

Jones, Arthur E., and Kline, Lawrence O., eds. A Union Checklist of Editions of The Publications of John and Charles Wesley. MSS. The Methodist Librarians Fellowship.

ii. Works of John Wesley.

Advice to a Young Clergyman (Samuel Wesley). London:Rivington, 1735.

The Arminian Magazine. Consisting of Extracts and Original Treatises on Universal Redemption. Vols.1-14 (1778-1791); London.

A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue. 30 vols.; London, 1819-1827.

The Christian's Pattern; or a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ (à Kempis). London: Rivington, 1735.

A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection (Law). Newcastle:Gooding,1743.

A Treatise on Christian Prudence (Norris). 3rd ed.; Bristol: Farley,1749.

A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week. 3rd ed.; London:Hutton,1738.

A Collection of Psalms and Hymns. Charles-Town,1737. Facsimile; Charleston:Dalcho Historical Society, 1964.

The Complete English Dictionary. Bristol:Pine, 1764.

The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith and Good Works. Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England. 9th ed.; Newcastle:Gooding,1749.

Explanatory Notes upon The New Testament. Naperville: Allenson, 1958.

An Extract from Mr. Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life. Philadelphia:Conrad,1803.

An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal from his Embarking for Georgia to his Return to London. 1st ed.; Bristol: Farley, n.d..

An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal from February 1,1737-8. To his Return from Germany. 1st ed.; London:Strahan,1740.

The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. ed. Curnock; 8 vols.; London:Epworth,1909-1916.

The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. ed. Telford; 8 vols.; London,Epworth,1931.

The Life of God in the Soul of Man (Scougal). 2nd ed.; Bristol: Farley,1749.

The Manners of the Antient Christians (Fleury). 2nd ed.; Bristol:Farley,1749.

The Nature and Design of Christianity (Law). 8th ed.; Bristol:Pine,1765.

The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley. ed.Osborn; 13 vols.; London:Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868-1872.

Reflections upon the Conduct of Human Life; with Reference to Learning and Knowledge (Norris). 3rd ed.; London:Cock,1755.

Sermon: Matthew 6:33 (1725). Photographic Copy from the Library of Russell J. Colman lodged in the Library of Drew University, also in Wesley's First Sermon and Other Beginnings. London:Kelly,1903.

The Standard Sermons of John Wesley. ed.Sugden; 2 vols.; London: Epworth,1921.

The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. 32 vols.; Bristol: William Pine, 1771-1774.

The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.. 3rd ed.; ed. Jackson; 14 vols.; London: Mason,1829-1831. See also The Works of John Wesley. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958-1959, a reprint of the Jackson Edition.

C. THE WRITINGS OF OTHER MEMBERS OF THE WESLEY FAMILY

Clarke, Adam, Memoirs of the Wesley Family. London: Kershaw, 1823.

Priestly, Joseph, Original Letters by The Rev. John Wesley and His Friends. Birmingham:Pearson,1791.

Stevenson, George, Memorials of the Wesley Family. London: Partridge, 1876.

Wesley, Charles, The Journal of The Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A. 2 vols.; London:Mason, 1849.

Wesley, Samuel, Dissertationes in Librum Jobi. London,1736.

Wesley, Samuel, The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. London:Harper,1693.

D. SECONDARY SOURCES ON JOHN WESLEY'S LIFE AND THOUGHT

Baker, Frank, "Wesley's Puritan Ancestry," The London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 187 (1962), 180-186.

Bowmer, John C., The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism. London:Dacre,1951.

Cannon, William R., The Theology of John Wesley. New York: Abingdon,1946.

Cell, George Croft, The Rediscovery of John Wesley. New York: Henry Holt, 1935.

Coke, Thomas and Moore, Henry, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.. London: Paramore, 1792.

Davies, Rupert, Methodism. Penguin Books, 1963.

Green, V.H.H. The Young Mr. Wesley. London:Arnold,1961.

Kirk, John, The Mother of the Wesleys. Cincinnati, 1867.

Lawson, A.B., John Wesley and the Christian Ministry. London: S.P.C.K.,1963.

Lindström, Harald, Wesley and Sanctification. London:Epworth, 1950.

Michalson, Carl, "The Hermeneutics of Holiness in Wesley," pp.127-141 in The Heritage of Christian Thought, eds. Robert E. Cushman and Egil Grislis. New York: Harper and Row,1965.

Moore, Henry, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., 2 vols.; London:Kershaw, 1824-1825.

Newton, John A., Methodism and the Puritans. London:William's Trust,1964.

Outler, Albert C., John Wesley. New York, Oxford, 1964.

Overton, J.H., John Wesley. Boston:Houghton, 1891.

Piette, Maximin, John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism, trans. Howard. New York:Sheed and Ward, 1937.

Schmidt, Martin, John Wesley, A Theological Biography. trans. Norman Goldhawk, London:Epworth,1962.

Schmidt, Martin, The Young Wesley, trans. L.A. Fletcher. London:Epworth,1958.

Simon, John, John Wesley and the Religious Societies. London: Epworth,1921.

Towlson, Clifford W., Moravian and Methodist. London:Epworth, 1957.

Tyerman, Luke, The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.. 3 vols.; New York:Harper,1872.

Urlin, R. Denny, The Churchman's Life of Wesley. London: S.P.C.K., n.d..

Urlin, R. Denny, John Wesley's Place in Church History. London:Rivington,1870.

Wesley Historical Society, Publications and Proceedings. Burnley, England, 1896 - .

Whitehead, John, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.. Philadelphia:Stockton,1845.

E. OTHER WORKS CITED

Ante-Nicene Fathers. Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D.325, eds. Roberts and Donaldson; Vols. I (The Apostolic Fathers), II (Clement of Alexandria), IV (Tertullian), VII (Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions). New York:Scribners,1926.

Aquinas, Thomas, Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. ed. C. Pegis; 2 vols.; New York: Random,1945.

Barth, Karl, Church Dogmatics. vols. I/1, I/2, II/2, English translations; Edinburgh:Clark,1936,1956, 1957.

Boas, George, Essays on Primitivism and Related Ideas in the Middle Ages. Baltimore:John Hopkins,1948.

Brunner, Emil, The Mediator, trans. Olive Wyon. London: Lutterworth,1934.

Butler, Dugald, Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists. Edinburgh:Blackwood,1899.

Butler, Dugald, John Wesley and George Whitefield in Scotland. Edinburgh:Blackwood,1898.

Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion. ed. John T. McNeill; 2 vols.; Philadelphia:Westminster,1960.

Copleston, Frederick, A History of Philosophy, Vol. 5, Hobbes to Hume. Maryland:Newman,1961.

Cross, F.L., ed. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. Oxford,1961.

Dörries, Klosterman, Kroeger, eds. Die Geistlichen Homilien des Makarios. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964.

Dowey, E.A., The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology. New York:Columbia,1952.

Flew, R. Newton, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology. Oxford,1934.

Henderson, G.D., The Burning Bush. Edinburgh:St.Andrews, 1957.

Henderson, G.D., Religious Life in Seventeenth-Century Scotland. Cambridge,1937.

Heppe, Heinrich, Reformed Dogmatics. Rev. ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G.T.Thomson. London:Allen and Unwin,1950.

Jaeger, Werner, Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius. Leiden:Brill,1954.

Kelly, J.N.D., The Athanasian Creed. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Kelly, J.N.D., Early Christian Doctrines. London:Black, 1958.

Knight, W.S.M., The Life and Works of Hugo Grotius. London: Grotius Society,1925.

Marriott, G.L., Macarii Anecdota, Seven Unpublished Homilies of Macarius. Harvard Theological Studies V, 1918.

Molland, Einar, The Conception of the Gospel in the Alexandrian Theology. Oslo,1938.

O'Neil, Charles J., Imprudence in St. Thomas Aquinas. The Aquinas Lecture, 1955; Milwaukee:Marquette University, 1955.

Osborn, Eric F., The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria. Cambridge, 1957.

Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca. J.P.Migne, ed.; Tomus VII.; Paris, 1857.

Schaff, Philip, The Creeds of Christendom. 3 vols.; New York: Harper, 1877.

Tertulliani Opera, Pars II, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Turnholti, Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, MCMLIV.

Tinsley, E.J., The Imitation of God in Christ. London: SCM., 1960.

Troeltsch, Ernst, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon. 2 vols.; London: Allen and Unwin,1931.

Voeltzel, René, "La Methode theologique de Hugo Grotius," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 32 (1952), 126-133.

F. OTHER WORKS CONSULTED

Abbey, Charles J. and Overton, John H., The English Church in the Eighteenth Century. 2 vols.; London: Green,1878.

Anderson, William K., ed. Methodism. New York and Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1947.

Arminius, James, The Works of James Arminius, D.D. ed. Nichols; 3 vols.; London:Longman,1825.

Bengel, John Albert, Gnomon Novi Testamenti. Stuttgart, 1860.

Bett, Henry, The Spirit of Methodism. London:Epworth,1937.

Burtner, R.W., and Chiles, R.E., eds. A Compend of Wesley's Theology. New York:Abingdon,1954.

Calamy, Benjamin, Thirteen Sermons preached on Several Occasions. no imp.,1726.

Carter, Henry, The Methodist Heritage. London:Epworth,1951.

Chiles, Robert E. Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790-1935. New York:Abingdon,1965.

Clarke, Samuel, Sermons on Several Subjects. Vol.II; London: Priestly,1820.

Cragg, G.R., The Church and the Age of Reason (1648-1789). Penguin Books, 1960.

Cragg, G.R., Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century. Cambridge,1964.

Cushman, Robert E., "Theological Landmarks in the Revival under Wesley," Religion in Life, 27 (1957-1958), 105-118.

Davies, Horton, Worship and Theology in England, From Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850. Princeton,1961.

Deschner, John, Wesley's Christology, An Interpretation. Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960.

Dimond, Sydney G., The Psychology of the Methodist Revival. Oxford, 1926.

Eayrs, George, John Wesley, Christian Philosopher and Church Founder. London:Epworth,1926.

Von Eicken, Erich, Rechfertigung und Heiligung bei Wesley. University of Heidelberg, 1934.

Fletcher, John, Works. 4 vols.; New York:Carlton and Phillips, 1851-1854.

Flew, R. Newton and Davies, Rupert E., eds., The Catholicity of Protestantism. Philadelphia:Muhlenberg,1950.

Hildebrandt, Franz, Christianity according to the Wesleys. London:Epworth,1955.

Hildebrandt, Franz, From Luther to Wesley. London:Lutterworth, 1951.

Hoon, Paul W., "The Soteriology of John Wesley." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh, 1936.

Jeffery, Thomas Reed, John Wesley's Religious Quest. New York: Vantage,1960.

À Kempis, Thomas, The Imitation of Christ. ed. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. New York:Doubleday, 1960.

Knox, David Broughton, The Doctrine of Faith in the Reign of Henry VIII. London:Clarke,1961.

Lampe, G.W.H., ed., The Doctrine of Justification by Faith. London:Mowbray, 1954.

Lee, Umphrey, John Wesley and Modern Religion. Nashville: Cokesbury, 1936.

Leger, Augustin, La Jeunesse de Wesley, L'Angleterre Religieuse et Les Origines du Methodisme au XVIIIe Siècle. Paris:Libraire Hachette et Cie., 1910.

Leighton, Robert, The Whole Works of the Most Reverend Robert Leighton, D.D. 4 vols.; London:Duncan,1825.

More, Henry, The Theological Works of the Most Pious and Learned Henry More, D.D. London:Downing,1708.

Mossner, Ernest Campbell, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason. New York:Macmillan,1936.

Nagler, Arthur Wilford, Pietism and Methodism. Nashville, 1918.

New, John F.H., Anglican and Puritan, The Basis of Their Opposition, 1558-1640. Stanford, 1964.

Peters, John L., Christian Perfection and American Methodism. New York:Abingdon, 1956.

Ramsay, Andrew Michael, The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion. Glasgow, 1748.

Rattenbury, J. Ernest, The Conversion of the Wesleys. London:Epworth,1938.

Rupp, E. Gordon, "Methodism in Relation to Protestant Tradition," Proceedings of the Eighth Ecumenical Methodist Conference. London:Epworth,1952.

Rupp, E. Gordon, Principalities and Powers. New York: Abingdon, 1952.

Sangster, W.E., The Path to Perfection. New York:Abingdon, 1943.

Shipley, David C. "Methodist Arminianism in the Theology of John Fletcher." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1942.

Shipley, David C., "Wesley and Some Calvinistic Controversies," The Drew Gateway, XXV (Summer, 1955), 195-210.

Southey, Robert, The Life of Wesley: and the Rise and Progress of Methodism. 2 vols.; New York:Harper, 1847.

Theologica Germanica, trans. Susanna Winkworth. London: Macmillan, 1924.

Thomas, W.H. Griffith, The Principles of Theology, An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles. London:Longmans, 1930.

Thompson, Edgar W., Wesley:Apostolic Man. London:Epworth, 1957.

Townsend, Workman and Eayrs, eds. A New History of Methodism. 2 vols.; London:Hodder and Stoughton, 1909.

Turner, George Allen, The More Excellent Way. Indiana: Light and Life, 1952.

Tyerman, Luke, The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, 2 vols.; New York:Randolph,1877.

Watson, Philip, The Message of the Wesleys. New York: Macmillan,1964.

Watson, Richard, The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Cooperstown:Phinney,1845.

Wesley, John, ed. A Concise Ecclesiastical History from The Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Present Century (Mosheim). 4 vols.; London: Paramore,1781.

Wesley, John, ed. An Extract of Mr. Richard Baxter's Aphorisms of Justification. 1st ed.; Newcastle: Gooding,1745.

Whichcote, Benjamin, Moral and Religious Aphorisms. London:Payne,1753.

Whitefield, George, The Christian's Companion: or Sermons on Several Subjects. London:1738.

Whitefield, George, The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield, M.A. 6 vols.; London:Dilly and Company, 1771-1772.

Williams, Colin W., John Wesley's Theology Today. New York: Abingdon,1960.

Wood, A. Skevington, The Inextinguishable Blaze. Grand Rapids:Eerdmans,1960.

Yates, Arthur S., The Doctrine of Assurance with Special Reference to John Wesley. London:Epworth,1952.